AUGUSTA DENBEIGH.

AUGUSTA DENBEIGH;

A NOVEL.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR WILLIAM LANE,

AT THE

Minerva-Press

LEADENHALL-STREET.

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AUGUSTA DENBEIGH.

CHAP. XIX.

THE ſituation of Merton Lodge, where the travellers arrived in ſafety, was beautiful and romantic. The park and pleaſure grounds were on a large ſcale, and exhibited a degree of grandeur, to which how-

ever, the houſe did but ill accord: It had indeed been no more than a hunting ſeat, before that part of the eſtate on which Sefton Caſtle was placed, deſcended to the younger branch of the family. The late Lord Merton, not having money enough to build a new houſe, had enlarged the old one, ſo as to make it thoroughly convenient. As it was his conſtant reſidence, it ſuffered nothing from neglect; and every beauty which nature had beſtowed, was rendered more beautiful by the aſſiſtance of art.

Although Lady Merton had been abſent for ſo ſhort a time, her neighbours appeared to feel a ſincere joy at her return. Theſe were but few; and Auguſta remarked with ſurpriſe the difference of manners which was perceptible between them, and the circles ſhe had ſeen in London. There, every body talked much, laughed more, were perfectly at their eaſe, and too wellbred to imagine they could be troubleſome. Here, each ſeemed to labour under an awkward reſtraint, which

not even the good humoured affability of Lady Merton could remove; and in the fear of offending, they appeared to have forgot that any efforts were neceſſary to contribute to the pleaſures of converſation. She conſoled herſelf for ſo unwelcome a change, by reflecting that in more poliſhed circles, all was ſuperficial. Here, thought ſhe, I ſhall find ſincerity, humility, and rectitude of heart.

Among the viſitants at Merton Lodge, one family ſo particularly ſtruck Auguſta, that ſhe could not forbear making ſome inquiries about them.

"The daughter," ſaid Lady Merton, "is ſenſible and pleaſing; and indeed it is her ſociety alone which induces me to aſſociate with the others. Mr. Simpſon made a fortune abroad, and you may perceive by his dialect, that he is totally uneducated, and that his extraction muſt have been mean: But notwithſtanding this, the ſon has ſo many pretenſions, and talks ſo inceſſantly about his family, that

he is the moſt inſufferable coxcomb I ever met with. His father is the only perſon who drives a carriage in the town where they reſide, and I really believe it is this ſilly circumſtance, which gives him ſo much conſequence. He has certainly talents, but they are of a ſatiric ſort, which I equally dread and deſpiſe."

"I am very ſorry for his ſiſter," replied Auguſta, "who ſeems indeed to be amiable, and the reverſe of what your ladyſhip has deſcribed."

"She certainly is ſo," ſaid Lady Merton; "and amongſt all my neareſt neighbours, I think ſhe is the only one you will like for a companion: I will therefore ſoon ſend them an invitation to dine with us."

The journey, change of air, and the ſweet ſcenery of Merton Lodge, had altogether ſo far tranquilliſed Auguſta's ſpirits, that her looks already beſpoke an amendment in her health.

Lady

Lady Merton, whoſe friendſhip for her increaſed every day, was moſt happy to obſerve this. She accompanied her in her morning rambles through the woods, whoſe ſheltering ſhades had protected the early bloſſoms of May, which now in return enlivened their tender foliage with the brighteſt tints. In the evening they read together, or Auguſta played on the harpſichord whilſt Lady Merton worked.

On the day appointed, Mr. and Miſs Simpſon arrived at Merton Lodge; for young Mr. Simpſon was detained elſewhere. After the firſt ceremonies were over, Mr. Simpſon ſaid, "Pray, ma'am, do's your ladyſhip ever remember ſuch mature warm weather at this time of the year?"

"The ſeaſon is uncommonly fine indeed," replied ſhe.

"We ſaw a number of liſteneſſes in the

hedges," ſaid he, "which Harriot ſays is a very extraordinary thing."

"The lichnis," ſaid Miſs Simpſon, bluſhing exceſſively, "is not uſed to bloſſom ſo early.

"You ladies," cried Lady Merton, "are botaniſts, and will, I am ſure, have mutual pleaſure in being better known to each other."

"If that young lady is as great a natural as my daughter," ſaid Mr. Simpſon, "they will be nice companions, and I hope we ſhall ſee her often."

Auguſta bowed her acknowledgments, and pitied the confuſion into which this ſpeech had thrown Miſs Simpſon.

"Your ladyſhip ſtaid but a ſhort time in London," ſaid Mr. Simpſon. "I ſuppoſe it is over-run with French Arcoſtats; and, to

be

be ſure, when the king is expoſed, he will come here alſo; for where elſe can he be ſo ſafe? All Europe ſeems going to war, except England and America: But pray, ma'am, do you give their titles to theſe depraved French nobles?"

"It is no wonder," replied Lady Merton, "that thoſe unhappy people fly from their own country, which is now become the ſcene of the moſt horrible maſſacres; and ſurely every kingdom ought to afford an aſylum to the miſerable. At the commencement of the revolution, numbers of the nobility, were patriotic enough to ſacrifice their titles at the newly erected ſhrine of liberty; and thoſe who thus relinquiſhed, cannot now conſiſtently receive them."

"If they were to ſuffer no greater loſs then the derivation of their titles," ſaid Mr. Simpſon, "it woud be of little conſequence. Property is the only thing that ought to make the diſtinction between people; and thoſe who

have the ſubſtance, need not quarrel about the ſhadow.

"It is dreadful and affecting," ſaid Miſs Simpſon, "to obſerve the ſavage outrages which are committed among a people, who call themſelves the moſt refined nation on earth. There cannot perhaps be a more ſevere ſatire on the frivolity, and indeciſive character of the Pariſians, than what is exhibited in their public prints; for the very ſame paper which announces to us the murder of thouſands of their fellow citizens, conveys alſo an account of the neweſt faſhions."

"Your remark is perfectly juſt," replied Lady Merton.

"And I rather think we ſhall have occaſion to obſerve, that ſubordination has an influence on the manners, as the reſtrictions of the law, have upon the morals of ſociety. We can hardly be grateful enough for our own invaluable form of government,

vernment, which, though perhaps faulty in ſome reſpects, is on the whole unequalled."

"Aye, aye," cried Mr. Simpſon. "Our poſſeſſions are ſecured to us, and that is enough; and I wiſh every perſon who writes a label upon government was to be impriſoned for life."

"That," ſaid Lady Merton, ſmiling, "would be to erect a baſtile in England, which God forbid."

Auguſta had ſilently liſtened to the diſcuſſion of theſe two firſt Engliſh topics, the weather and politics, when dinner was announced. She was greatly pleaſed with the manners of Miſs Simpſon, and no leſs diverted with the ſingularities of her father; who ſeemed to admire every ſentence which fell from his daughter's lips, and who indeed, from his unfortunate miſapplication of many of them, proved how very neceſſary a little further attention was.

As they were taking their tea, young Simpſon entered the room. He began a long explanation to Lady Merton, of the nature of the engagement which had kept him from dinner.

"Strangeways," continued he, "would not take any denial to my ſtaying all night, until I told him, that my family dined, and ſpent the evening with your ladyſhip, and that I ſhould get into terrible diſgrace if I did not make my appearance."

"Was Lord Strangeways of the party?" aſked Mr. Simpſon.

"Yes, Sir," anſwered his ſon. "He, and I, and Gower, dined at Laſſington's. By the way, Harriot, I have exchanged your bay mare, for a very beautiful galloway."

"I hope it is as gentle a creature," ſaid ſhe, "as the other, for you know I am a great coward."

"Non-

"Nonſenſe," replied he. "I will have you to ride as other people do. He has ſpirit, but Lady Sarah has mounted him. Pray, Miſs Denbeigh, will you be of our riding party to-morrow morning?"

"I have never yet been on horſeback," ſaid Auguſta; "and I think I ſhall not dare to make the attempt."

"I am ſurpriſed at that," replied young Mr. Simpſon; "as every body rides; and you," added he, laughing very loud, "woud make a good equeſtrian figure."

"If you hold that out as a motive to Miſs Denbeigh," cried Lady Merton, "I ſuppoſe you ſuſpect that it has a general influence on all young ladies."

"I ſuſpect," anſwered he, with another very loud laugh, "that it is the general ſtudy of the ſex, how they may appear to the beſt advantage."

"We will apply the obſervation to the mind," ſaid Miſs Simpſon; "and then I think we ſhall regret that the men are not equally ſtudious how to pleaſe."

"You are right, my Harriot," cried Mr. Simpſon. "But the young men of the preſent times care only about pleaſing themſelves."

"And what did the young men of former times do?" ſaid young Mr. Simpſon, in an ironical tone. "I am ſure, if one may judge from inference, if they ſtudied ever ſo little how to pleaſe themſelves, they were ſtill leſs able to give pleaſure to others."

Old Mr. Simpſon ſeemed diſinclined to make any reply to this ſarcaſm of his ſon; and Lady Merton, too much diſguſted to continue the converſation, immediately called for cards. Auguſta, for the firſt time, ſat down to commerce, and for the firſt time thought cards an agreeable interruption. Mr. William Simpſon

Simpſon inſiſted upon being her inſtructer, and ſhared with her in the profits of the game. He ſtrove to impreſs her with an idea of his wit, but ſhe heard him without attention, and her ſpirits were wearied with his inceſſant laughter: And when at laſt, a period was put to the viſit, ſhe felt herſelf happy and relieved.

CHAP.

CHAP. XX.

ON the following morning, Auguſta ſtrolled out by herſelf, Lady Merton having letters to write; and ſhe ſoon perceived at ſome little diſtance, Mr. William Simpſon and his ſiſter on horſeback. He was upon the gallop, and ſeemed encouraging Miſs Simpſon to follow him. Her horſe, which appeared fiery and untractable, at length ſprung forward, and paſſing Mr. Simpſon, ran acroſs the park, with incredible ſwiftneſs. He checked his ſpeed, and Auguſta looked forward

forward to the event with trembling ſolicitude. Miſs Simpſon kept her ſeat for a conſiderable time, but at laſt fell. Mr. Simpſon now gallopped to her as faſt as he could, and Auguſta almoſt flew acroſs the lawn. She arrived ſoon after he had raiſed his ſiſter from the ground, and found, to her great joy, that ſhe had received no conſiderable injury. Her brother, after ſome harſh expreſſions, on her want of courage, which he ſaid had occaſioned the accident, remounted his own horſe, and rode after the other.

Although Miſs Simpſon was not hurt, ſhe was extremely ill with her fright. Auguſta ſupported her, and they directed their ſteps towards the houſe; but long before they reached it, young Mr. Simpſon overtook them, leading his ſiſter's horſe.

"I promiſe you," ſaid he, "the creature is quite tamed, ſo you had beſt mount again directly."

"I hope

"I hope," replied Auguſta, "Miſs Simpſon will not attempt to do that. Lady Merton, I am ſure, will ſend her home in the carriage.

"Oh no," anſwered he, "not for the world. Now is the time to conquer her fears, and I will have her ride home on horſe-back.

Auguſta expoſtulated, but in vain; and Miſs Simpſon was obliged to yield to her peremptory brother; who however condeſcended to promiſe, that ſhe ſhould walk her horſe the whole of the way home.

When Auguſta related this circumſtance to Lady Merton, ſhe regretted exceſſively that ſhe had not been preſent, declaring ſhe would not have permitted ſo cruel a reſtraint to have been put upon Miſs Simpſon.

"The dictatorial manners of that young man," added ſhe, "is intolerable; but we will

will go this evening and inquire after the poor girl. I think I can perſuade the father not to let her mount this run-away horſe again.

They accordingly drove to Mr. Simpſon's, who received them with very great joy, but told them that his daughter was ſo ill in conſequence of her fright, that ſhe kept her room. Auguſta received his permiſſion to viſit her there, and Lady Merton took the opportunity of her abſence, to intreat that he would put a negative upon Miſs Simpſon's riding the ſame horſe again.

" I am very much obliged to your ladyſhip," anſwered he, " but I have exhibited her already, and my ſon is much diſpleaſed with me. To be ſure he only wiſhes to have her do what is faſhionable; but I cannot conſent to let her run any ſuch dangers, though my expectorations have very little effect upon him."

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Here young Mr. Simpſon entered the room, and ſhortly after Auguſta and Miſs Simpſon, who found herſelf ſo much better, that ſhe inſiſted upon joining the party below ſtairs. Mr. William Simpſon was gloomy, and abrupt in his anſwers to his father, who tried to coax him into good humour. Soon after tea the two ladies departed, having firſt obtained a promiſe from Miſs Simpſon, that ſhe would ſpend the next day at Merton Lodge.

Mutual ſentiments of eſteem ſoon united Auguſta and Miſs Simpſon in the ſtricteſt bonds of friendſhip, and ſcarcely a day paſt without their ſeeing each other. A companion of her own age and ſex, to whom ſhe could relate each ſentiment of her ingenuous mind, was ſo truely delightful to Auguſta, that ſhe congratulated herſelf on having obtained the poſſeſſion of the firſt earthly felicity, a ſincere friend. Young Mr. Simpſon was frequently with them. Gratified by being on ſuch an intimate footing in Lady Mer-

ton's

ton's family, he ſoftened, as much as he could, the aſperity of his manners, and exerted his talents to render himſelf agreeable: Whilſt they, from being in the habit of ſeeing him often, became leſs ſenſible of, or perhaps more indulgent to his foibles.

The diſtinguiſhing attentions which Lady Merton paid to Auguſta, ſecured to her the reſpect of others. Mr. William Simpſon had remarked this; and indeed his behaviour had been regulated by it; for there ſeemed to hang a ſort of myſtery over the connexions of Auguſta, which with all his penetration he could not diſcover. He had frequently beſought his ſiſter to learn from Auguſta to whom ſhe belonged; but her delicacy and good ſenſe withheld her from the enquiry. The captivating graces of Auguſta's mind and perſon had made an impreſſion on his heart, which he however kept in proper ſubordination, until he had acquired a thorough knowledge of her real circumſtances. Had ſhe been the daughter, inſtead of the friend

friend of Lady Merton, he would have been diſtractedly in love with her: But his affection hung in equilibrium, until he heard whether her family and fortune merited ſuch a captive.

Lady Merton entered Auguſta's apartment one morning with a letter in her hand.

"Miſs Merton," ſaid ſhe, "has employed her woman to write to me. She will be here to-morrow. It ſeems ſhe is ſo dreadfully afflicted with nervous head achs, that ſhe is incapable of writing herſelf, and her phyſician has ordered her into the country. I do not wonder that ſuch irregular hours as ſhe keeps, have injured her health. However, as I flatter myſelf it will only be a temporary affliction, I cheriſh the hope, that it may be a ſalutary one, by proving to her the folly of ſuch a mode of life as ſhe leads."

Auguſta concurred in the wiſh, and aſſiſted Lady Merton in making ſuch arrangements as

as they thought would be agreeable to their new gueſt.

She arrived the following day, to a late dinner. Her extreme languor ſufficiently evinced how unwell ſhe really was; and Auguſta, forgetting whatever had formerly given her cauſe for diſpleaſure, with compaſſionate kindneſs devoted her whole time to her.

This, however, ſhe ſeemed to receive more as her due, than the ſpontaneous offering of attentive politeneſs. As Lady Merton knew her extreme averſion to retired life, and that ſome ſort of amuſements muſt be obtained, ſhe adopted the only alternative ſhe had, which was that of forming little parties from among her neighbours. In almoſt any other ſituation, Miſs Merton would have looked upon theſe with ineffable contempt; but as their ſociety offered the only entertainment, which ſhe conceived was to be met with at Merton Lodge, ſhe condeſcended to pay them

a diſtant degree of civility. The eaſy familiarity of young Mr. Simpſon, however, offended her pride; and to him ſhe generally aſſumed a good deal of hauteur, which viſibly mortified him. He determined to retaliate this neglect; and therefore redoubled his aſſiduities to Auguſta; well knowing that the only way to pique a vain woman, is to ſhew her that you give a preference to the charms of her rival. Auguſta, to whom his attentions were really diſagreeable, readily conjectured why they were paid; and as they involved her in the intended puniſhment, would gladly have diſpenſed with them.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXI.

MISS MERTON in a ſhort time recovered her health, and began to talk of taking her departure for Sefton Caſtle, when Lady Merton received letters from her ſon, announcing his arrival in England, and informing her that his impatience to ſee her was ſo great, that he ſhould ſet out the following morning for Merton Lodge. The boſom of this affectionate parent was extremely agitated at this news, which bade her expect to ſee her ſon momentally. Her ſuſpenſe was not of long duration, for he arrived within an hour after his letter. Auguſta was a witneſs to their

firſt interview, which evinced to her how dear they were to each other. Lady Merton was not however ſufficiently collected for ſome time, to introduce her ſon to Auguſta; but when ſhe became ſenſible of her omiſſion, ſhe took the hand of Auguſta, and ſaid, "Let me, my deareſt Merton, preſent you to the amiable and beloved friend of your mother, whoſe virtues merit your higheſt reſpect; and you, my ſweet Auguſta, to that ſon who will, I truſt, feel for you the affection of a brother.

Lord Merton, who had not before even obſerved Auguſta, reſpectfully kiſſed her hand, and gazing at her for a moment, anſwered, "That he ſhould indeed be proud of ſo charming a ſiſter."

Lady Merton now informed her ſon of Miſs Merton's being a viſitor in the houſe; and hinted, that ſhe thought it would be right for him to ſend and entreat permiſſion to wait upon her, in her dreſſing room.

"Oh!"

"Oh!" cried he, gaily, "I will be my own meſſenger," and immediately ran up ſtairs.

Auguſta ſhared largely in the happineſs of Lady Merton, who was not only overjoyed at ſeeing her ſon reſtored in ſafety to his native country, but had alſo the ſupreme ſatisfaction of obſerving an improvement in his perſon and manners, which is not often attained by thoſe who viſit foreign kingdoms. Lord Merton was in fact, what the world univerſally calls an exceeding handſome young man. He had a great degree of vivacity, and an equal portion of good humour. There was a gracefulneſs in his manner which was particularly ſtriking, and his underſtanding and heart were worthy of the culture they had received from his mother.

He returned to them in about half an hour, but ſeemed to have loſt much of his former gaiety. Lady Merton told him it was near

their dinner hour, and they all ſeparated to dreſs.

When Auguſta again entered the drawing room, the abſurdity of Miſs Merton, could not eſcape her notice. Her deportment was ſo ſtately, that ſhe ſeemed to exact homage from all who approached her, and eſpecially Lord Merton, who was obliged to repreſs a thouſand little lively ſallies, leaſt her dignity ſhould be offended. So unfortunate is the influence of pride and formality, that the individual who poſſeſſes thoſe unenviable qualities, may at any time diſturb the harmony of the happieſt circles: And ſo it fared with this little ſociety, for the reſtraint impoſed by Miſs Merton, threw a gloom over their repaſt, and ſoon after dinner, Lord Merton was left to his own reflections. Theſe were by no means pleaſant. The reception he had met with from Miſs Merton, and the viſible change in her manners, gave him but too much reaſon to ſuppoſe that ſome other attachment had alienated her affections from him

him, and that his preſence had therefore given her no ſenſations but thoſe of regret. Accuſtomed, as he always had been, to look forward to her as his deſtined wife, he had never before examined whether ſhe had the entire poſſeſſion of his heart, or not; and the eaſe with which he found he could now relinquiſh his hopes, gave him the firſt doubts he had ever entertained of the fervency of his affection. If a predeliction in favour of another, rendered her thus diſdainful, he determined to releaſe her from thoſe engagements ſhe had formed with him; and if from a change of diſpoſition and manners, ſhe was become ſo thoroughly repulſive and diſagreeable, he thought he had equally a right to be releaſed. Her immenſe poſſeſſions, formerly the inheritance of his anceſtors, were thought of but for a moment; for he recoiled from the idea of receiving obligations from an imperious tyrant.

His father's intentions, his mother's wiſhes, had their full weight, and ſoftened his heart

into hopes that he might have miſtaken the character of Miſs Merton: That her reſerve might be found to originate from ſome other cauſes, perhaps her doubts of him: And if ſo, he reſolved to convince her, that he merited the choice her friends had made for her, and was ready to offer to her his vows at the altar.

In this diſpoſition of mind, he joined the ladies in the drawing room. He found Mr. William Simpſon there, who had aſſumed to himſelf the privilege of dropping in, whenever he felt ſo diſpoſed. The gentlemen were introduced to each other, for they were entire ſtrangers; Mr. Simpſon's father having ſettled in that neighbourhood during the abſence of Lord Merton.

Mr. William Simpſon was ſo much ſtruck with the fine figure and addreſs of Lord Merton, that he almoſt felt his own inſignificance. Recollecting, however, that ſuch an acquaintance would be deſirable, he reſolved to uſe his utmoſt

utmoſt endeavours to cultivate it; and therefore re-aſſuming a little of his ſelf complacency, he entered into converſation with him, on the ſubject of his travels. Lady Merton and Auguſta joined in it, but Miſs Merton was playing with a little Italian greyhound, which generally ſat by her on the ſofa. The information which Lord Merton gave them was ſo intereſting, that they ſeemed to have forgot ſhe was preſent, until his Lordſhip, wiſhing to avoid the appearance of neglect, addreſſed himſelf to her and ſaid, "You will naturally ſuppoſe that my long reſidence in Italy has made me more fond of muſic than ever; and I recollect with pleaſure your partiality for it; may I aſk the indulgence of hearing you play, without the fear that I am giving you too much trouble."

"Indeed, my Lord," replied Miſs Merton, "we have now ſo much muſic in England, that I have quite an averſion to it. Every body fancys they can play now; for

which reaſon I ſuppoſe it will ſoon grow out of faſhion.

Mr. William Simpſon, who knew where the ſarcaſm was intended, replied, "Your petition, my Lord, muſt be transferred to Miſs Denbeigh, whoſe ſtyle of performance would reconcile one to muſic, even if it were out of faſhion."

This pointed ſpeech, together with the compliment paid her, embarraſſed Auguſta ſo much, that ſhe begged to decline playing; but Lord Merton, who attributed her confuſion to her timidity, would not admit of her excuſes, and ſhe at laſt took her ſeat at the harpſichord.

Young Mr. Simpſon, who neglected no opportunity of mortifying Miſs Merton, addreſſed himſelf to her whilſt Auguſta was playing, and aſked if ſhe did not think her performance divine?

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"I think ſhe plays vaſtly well," anſwered ſhe with a ſmile, which was the firſt ſhe had ever honoured him with, "conſidering that the old man with whom ſhe lived in Wales is the only inſtructor ſhe ever had; but ſhe has no idea of taſte."

"The old man with whom ſhe lived in Wales," repeated Mr. William Simpſon to himſelf, and his thoughts were immediately detached from the performance.

Lord Merton's encomiums were ſo very great, that Auguſta was again diſconcerted. He wiſhed to have detained her longer at the harpſichord, but he feared, after Miſs Merton's declaration of her averſion to muſic, that ſhe might poſſibly conſtrue it into an act of rudeneſs to herſelf.

"I think," ſaid Lady Merton, "that you are fond of dancing, Miſs Merton."

"Oh, exceſſively, madam; eſpecially where one changes partners every two dances. To have the ſame partner for the whole evening, renders it the moſt odious, tireſome thing on earth.

"It is a well contrived thing enough," ſaid Mr. William Simpſon, "and like many other modern faſhions, is well calculated to conceal defects. The ſame ſmall talk will ſuffice for each partner, and they may mutually obtain the credit of being agreeable, without taking any trouble to render themſelves ſo."

"Well," continued Lady Merton, "we will have a ball in the courſe of the enſuing week, and as you, my dear Miſs Merton, love a crowd, I hope you will not be averſe to a dance with Lord Merton's tenants. The good creatures are at this moment demonſtrating their joy at his arrival, and I muſt really ſhew them ſome civility in return for their hearty kindneſs. I will try," added ſhe with a ſmile,

"to

" to collect a change of partners for you, that you may hear a profuſion of civil ſpeeches, and Mr. William Simpſon be ſpared the trouble of exerciſing his invention for new ones."

" Methinks," ſaid Lord Merton, " this cuſtom, in many inſtances, is extremely unpleaſant. If one has an agreeable partner it is terribly mortifying to have her taken away. I always upon thoſe occaſions feel the ſpirit of chivalry in me, and long to aſſert my right to the honour which has been conferred upon me. What ſay you, Miſs Denbeigh? Can you think a change of partners deſireable, when you hear the avowed motive?"

" The very reverſe, I ſhould ſuppoſe," anſwered ſhe, " but I cannot ſpeak experimentally, having never yet danced."

" My God!" exclaimed Miſs Merton, looking at Mr. Simpſon, " have you really never learned to dance?"

"No, madam," replied Auguſta, unconſcious of the cauſe there was for ſurpriſe, and unſuſpicious of the effect ſuch a declaration would have.

A ſilence of ſome moments enſued, during which Miſs Merton and Mr. Simpſon exchanged ſome very ſignificant looks, which Lady Merton obſerving, ſaid, "You, my dear Miſs Denbeigh, excel ſo very much in every ſuperior accompliſhment, that one could hardly regret your not having attained that, but from the loſs your friends ſuſtain, to whom it could not fail of being a freſh ſource of pleaſure."

Lord Merton indicated by his countenance how much he was delighted with this remark of his mother, whilſt Auguſta bowed with gratitude to her kind friend.

Mr. Simpſon finding a ceſſation in the converſation, aroſe to take his leave, and received from

from Miſs Merton a more gracious farewell than he had ever before met with. He ſhook hands moſt cordially with Lord Merton, and wiſhed Auguſta a haſty good night; being perſuaded that ſhe had no high claim upon his further attentions, ſince ſhe had never learnt to dance.

CHAP. XXII.

LORD MERTON's perſevering aſſiduities, inſtead of ſoftening the haughty manners of Miſs Merton, ſeemed only to give her ſtill higher ideas of her own importance. She believed herſelf totally indifferent to him, any farther than that her father had decreed he ſhould become her huſband; and as ſhe was by this means deprived of a choice, ſhe was determined to ſupport her dignity, by the ſtricteſt exertion to command reſpect. Lady Merton contemplated her vain and capricious behaviour with extreme pain; and the more ſo,

ſo, as ſhe viſibly perceived the diſguſt with which Lord Merton ſeemed to ſtruggle. She frequently ſought for ſympathy in the friendly boſom of Auguſta; who, though ſhe daily received from Miſs Merton innumerable little inſults, encouraged her to hope that theſe follies neither aroſe from the heart or the underſtanding, and would therefore of courſe wear away, when ſhe was more detached from thoſe ſocieties where ſhe had imbibed them. Theſe ſuggeſtions held out a ray of comfort to Lady Merton; but it was ſoon obſcured by the increaſing melancholy which ſhe obſerved in her ſon.

The day now arrived that was to celebrate the return of Lord Merton; and as it was chiefly deſigned as a day of jubilee for the tenants, the company all dined together in the hall: And this arrangement had been previouſly ſpoken of, that none of the other gueſts might feel any offence at being unexpectedly ſo aſſociated. Indeed ſeveral of them, in imitation of the condeſcenſion of Lady Mer-

ton,

ton, diſperſed themſelves round the table, ſo as to be of uſe to her, in taking care of her humble, but honeſt hearted viſitors. Miſs Merton, who had pointed to Mr. William Simpſon to take the chair next her, eat nothing, ſo much was ſhe ingroſſed in making remarks on the ſurrounding figures, to whom her ſupercilious looks were extremely diſtreſſing. The finery, as ſhe termed it, of the farmer's daughters underwent a ſtrict ſcrutiny, and her obſervations, imparted in whiſpers to Mr. William Simpſon, drew from him ſuch loud and inceſſant laughter, that Lady Merton was obliged to aſſume a degree of diſpleaſure which her benevolent features ſeldom wore, in order to check the impropriety of their behaviour. Auguſta and Miſs Simpſon, ſat on each hand of Lord Merton, at the bottom of the table, who appeared in high ſpirits, and delighted every one by the diſtinguiſhing attentions he paid them.

Lord Merton and Miſs Merton began the dance, for he had not failed in the punctilio of ſoli-

ſoliciting that honour, ſeveral days previous to the ball. She danced extremely well, and was proud to diſplay herſelf, even to thoſe very people, whom ſhe regarded with contempt; ſo inconſiſtent a thing is vanity. Auguſta, who ſat by, having without diſguiſe told every body who aſked her to dance, that ſhe know not how, was infinitely amuſed by the ſight of the dancers. Her feet beat time with the muſic, and ſhe fancied that if ſhe could aſſume courage to begin, ſhe could eaſily manage the intricacies of the figure. As ſhe had hitherto ſeen no dancing but that at the opera houſe, which every body called very fine, ſhe had fancied it a difficult attainment, and was therefore ſurpriſed by the cheerful ſcene of a country dance, in which every one appeared to her to acquit themſelves with eaſe and dexterity. She was relating to Lady Merton the impreſſion which this new ſcene had made upon her, when, the two firſt dances being finiſhed, Lord Merton approached, and ſmiling ſaid, "I come with a requeſt, which muſt not be refuſed, becauſe I know

know not how to reconcile myſelf to the mortification of a refuſal."

"Name it," replied Auguſta.

"It is," continued he, "that you will diſtinguiſh this day, by allowing me to have the happineſs of dancing the two next dances with you.

"After the confeſſion I have made of my ignorance," cried Auguſta, "have you really the temerity to engage in the taſk of becoming my inſtructor? What ſay you, madam, (turning to Lady Merton) ſhall I puniſh Lord Merton for his raſhneſs in attempting ſo arduous an undertaking?"

"The acceptance of his propoſal will oblige me as well as him," replied Lady Merton; "and it will moreover convince others, of what I know to be true, that you are above the ſilly affectation of refuſing to

ſhare

ſhare in the amuſement, becauſe you are conſcious that you do not excel in it."

Auguſta, after ſtipulating that ſhe ſhould go to the bottom of the ſet, ſuffered Lord Merton to lead her thither. The little ſhe had to do, in the going up the room, together with the commendations of Lord Merton, ſomewhat reaſſured her; but when ſhe met Miſs Merton, her affected ſurpriſe ſo entirely diſconcerted her, that ſhe forgot her part in the dance, and ſtood motionleſs; which produced a loud laugh from Miſs Merton and her partner, who was young Mr. Simpſon.

"I had better ſit down," ſaid Auguſta, "indeed I had; I ſhall only expoſe you to laughter, as well as myſelf, Lord Merton."

"My dear Miſs Denbeigh," exclaimed he, "you are the only perſon who does not perceive that all this ariſes from envy of your ſuperior attractions. Truſt to my judgement I entreat you; for I am ſo deeply intereſted in

in whatever relates to you, that worlds would not bribe me to draw you into merited ridicule.

" Auguſta bowed, but without giving implicit confidence to an opinion which ſhe ſaw was but too partial. Fortunately, however, Miſs Simpſon now came up, and ſaid, " Oh, Miſs Denbeigh, you are very ſly, if what my brother told me is true, that you avow you have never learnt to dance. You perform ſo well, that you muſt only have ſaid ſo to ſurpriſe us."

" My dear friend," replied Auguſta, " it is but too true, that this is the firſt time I ever made an attempt of the kind; and but for this praiſe of yours, I think I ſhould have given it up immediately."

" I am ſorry then," ſaid Miſs Simpſon, " that you declared as much, for believe me no one could have found it out."

Lord

Lord Merton's anxiety now redoubled; and when Auguſta went down the dance, his eye and hand, ſo well directed her, that ſhe made no miſtake in the figure, and ſhe wanted no better direction than her own ear for the time. Arrived at the bottom of the dance, ſhe received the commendations of Lady Merton. Her being entirely taken up with the part ſhe had to perform, ſpared her from one mortification prepared for her; for Miſs Merton had quitted the dance, and taken a ſeat, from whence ſhe could beſt divert herſelf with making obſervations. This however was not loſt upon Lord Merton, who, when they were ſeated, vehemently reprobated the incivilities his fair partner had met with; but attributed it, as before, to envy.

"Indeed," ſaid Auguſta, "I did not expect to find more indulgence, eſpecially as I had candidly confeſſed what ſhould have pleaded an excuſe for my awkwardneſs."

"Oh,"

" Oh," replied he, " call not any thing you do by that name: Your every action, and your every look, alike claim the admiration of all who ſee you."

Here Miſs Merton came up, attended by Mr. William Simpſon, who gave a gentle motion to an immenſe large fan, which he held in his hand, that the dreſs of Miſs Merton's hair might not be diſarranged.

" I have read," ſaid ſhe, " the ſtory of Iphigenia, and Miſs Denbeigh's *ſudden* improvement in the art of dancing, is, I ſuppoſe to be attributed to the ſame cauſe."

" Undoubtedly," cried Mr. William Simpſon. " Love is a wonder-working god."

The ſurpriſe of Auguſta, at this rude attack and inſinuation, kept her ſilent; but not ſo Lord Merton: He gave a look of reſentment firſt at Miſs Merton, and then turning to

to Mr. William Simpſon, he ſaid, " If that lady thinks herſelf privileged to indulge herſelf in ill-natured ſallies, *you*, at leaſt, Sir, ſhould remember, that impertinent freedoms call for chaſtiſement."

" I had no intention,—indeed I did not mean, my Lord," ſtammered out Mr. Simpſon, to offend either you or Miſs Denbeigh; and I am ſorry if Miſs Merton's livelineſs hurried me into an indiſcretion."

" Oh," ſaid Miſs Merton, colouring violently, " Lord Merton would threaten me with chaſtiſement if he durſt; but thank heaven I have not yet given him a right, neither will I ever put it in his power."

She then walked very majeſtically to the top of the room, and called another dance.

" How unhappy I am," ſaid Auguſta, addreſſing herſelf to Lord Merton, " to have occaſioned this diſagreeable altercation between

tween you and Miſs Merton. Leave me, I beſeech you, and try to appeaſe her."

"No, never," replied Lord Merton; "I will be the ſlave of her inſolence no longer. Such conduct releaſes me from my bonds, and from this moment I am free."

"For God's ſake," exclaimed Auguſta, "retract this haſty deciſion! Recollect how much your poor mother's peace of mind is involved in it."

"Alas!" ſaid Lord Merton, "is it not better ſhe ſhould ſacrifice her ambition, than I my happineſs?"

"I truſt," replied Auguſta, "that they will not be found incompatible with each other. Miſs Merton is young, and circumſtances have conſpired to render her the object of much adulation: But the time muſt ſoon arrive when ſhe will perceive of how little value that is, compared to the homage

of

of ſo worthy a heart as yours; and the little follies which obſcure her good qualities will then vaniſh."

"O Miſs Denbeigh," ſaid Lord Merton, "how amiable, how generous, is your mind! You not only forgive, but become the advocate of a woman who treats you with unprovoked contempt, and momentarily inſults you. Believe me," added he with a ſigh, "I have long contemplated the ſtrong oppoſition of your characters, and I have adored the one, as much as I have diſliked the other."

The fervour with which Lord Merton uttered the latter part of this ſpeech, diſconcerted Auguſta; and as ſhe made no reply, he thus continued:

"You know the nature of my engagement with Miſs Merton; tell me candidly, is it not more diſhonourable to marry a woman whom I diſlike, in order to poſſeſs her fortune, than

to

break through an agreement made without my conſent? It is apparent too that ſhe has an averſion to me; and to this I may add another reaſon, which is, that my heart is inviolably attached elſewhere."

"If you make me the caſuiſt," replied ſhe, "I muſt ſtate the caſe in a different way to what you have; for you have omitted one moſt material trait; which is, that ſince you have been able to judge of your father's diſpoſal of you, you have ratified it with your full conſent, and been the profeſſed admirer of Miſs Merton: A deſertion of her muſt therefore be *cruel*, to ſay no worſe of it; and if, after ſo many years ſpent in gaining her affections, it ſhould be found that you had lightly transferred yours to another, the whole world would certainly agree in calling it *unjuſt*. I think you are the neareſt relation Miſs Merton now has living. Let me aſk you if any other man had treated her in a ſimilar way, whether ſhe would not have

looked up to, and found protection from you?"

"Good God!" exclaimed Lord Merton, "in what an unfavourable light do you place my conduct! You, on whose good opinion my chief hopes of happiness now rest. Ah, Miss Denbeigh! grant me your pity, or I am the most wretched of men."

"My pity," replied she, "I sincerely give you, but my advice would do you more service, and that you will not take."

Here Lady Merton and old Mr. Simpson approached them, and Lord Merton had therefore only time to say, "Miss Denbeigh, you will not understand me." But he spoke it with so dejected an air, that Lady Merton seemed to observe him with surprise. She rallied them on being idle; and a gentleman who just then joined them, and who had before asked Augusta to dance, again solicited her to become his partner; but the ridicule

ſhe had experienced from Miſs Merton diſcouraged her from making another attempt, and ſhe alledged what was really true, that her fears had agitated her ſo much, that ſhe found herſelf unable to dance again.

"Perhaps the room is too hot for the young lady," cried old Mr. Simpſon. "For my part I wonder they have no contrivances in ball rooms to rectify the air."

"Ventilators are very good things," ſaid Lady Merton.

"Aye, aye," replied Mr. Simpſon, "undulators are what I meant."

Auguſta took this opportunity to eſcape unobſerved from the company; and when ſhe found herſelf alone, ſhe ſuffered her tears to flow unreſtrained. Her ſpirit was wounded by the unkindneſs of Miſs Merton, but more deeply ſo by the diſcovery ſhe had made of Lord Merton's ſentiments reſpecting herſelf, which

which ſhe ſaw would inevitably produce conſequences which ſhe dreaded to look forward to. She debated in her own mind, on the line of conduct it would be moſt proper for her to adopt, and at length determined, that if he again led to the ſubject, ſhe would no longer affect not to underſtand him, but to give ſuch decided diſcouragement to his pretenſions, as ſhe hoped would effectually deſtroy them. She reſolved not to communicate the affair to Lady Merton, as ſhe had at firſt propoſed, becauſe ſhe knew the pain it would give her, and ſhe hoped to make Lord Merton return to a ſenſe of what he owed to her, himſelf, the world, and his engagements.

She had remained for ſome time abſorbed by theſe ſort of reflections, when Lady Merton entered her room.

"You are in tears," ſaid ſhe, "and I know the cauſe."

She then told her, that ſhe had aſked Miſs Merton, how long it would be agreeable to her to dance, before ſupper, and received for reply, "That the ſooner the party broke up, the better, ſince the maſter of the ceremonies had ceaſed to treat his viſitors with any civility." That having applied to Lord Merton for an explanation of all this, he had related to her the affronting behaviour of Miſs Merton. "This ſilly girl," continued ſhe, "diſappoints all my ſchemes of happineſs; but let us return to the company, and think of her as little as we can."

At twelve o'clock Lady Merton and her party withdrew, to partake of a ſupper which was prepared for them; and at the ſame time ſideboard refreſhments were ſpread for the remainder of the company, who were left at liberty to continue dancing as long as they pleaſed.

The cheerfulneſs of the party had however entirely forſaken them. Lord Merton ſeemed to

to ſtruggle againſt a melancholy which he could not conquer: Lady Merton was abſent, and their viſitors, who perceived that ſomething was wrong, ſilent. Miſs Merton was the only perſon who appeared to have preſerved her good ſpirits. She was more than uſually talkative; laughed at her own bon mots, but addreſſed none of her converſation either to Lady Merton, Auguſta, or Lord Merton. Every one ſeemed willing to ſeparate; the carriages were therefore ordered, and a general ſeparation ſoon took place.

CHAP. XXIII.

AUGUSTA entered the breakfaſt parlour late, for her night had been ſleepleſs. She found Lady Merton in converſation with Miſs Merton's maid, who had brought an apology from her lady, for not attending her. Lord Merton ſoon joined them; and when their mutual inquiries had ceaſed, each ſeemed diſpoſed to remain ſilent. When their repaſt was finiſhed, Auguſta quitted the room, as ſhe thought that both Lord Merton and his mother might poſſibly wiſh for ſome private con-

converſation. She had ſcarcely ſeated herſelf in her dreſſing room, before ſhe ſaw from the window that Miſs Simpſon was riding up the avenue; and ſhe then recollected that ſhe had by appointment promiſed to aſſiſt her in the finiſhing of a landſcape. Though never leſs diſpoſed for the employment than at preſent, ſhe had ſufficient command over herſelf, to meet Miſs Simpſon upon the ſtairs with cheerfulneſs, and the drawing apparatus was ſoon placed before them. When they had nearly compleated the piece, Miſs Simpſon ſaid with a ſmile, "I am almoſt tempted, before I take my departure to offer my congratulations to Miſs Denbeigh."

"On what occaſion, pray?" aſked Auguſta.

"Your conqueſt of Lord Merton."

"Of Lord Merton!" exclaimed Auguſta, turning pale; "from whence ariſes ſo ill-founded a conjecture?"

"Nay," ſaid Miſs Simpſon, "if it is not true, and I have given you either pain or diſpleaſure, I ſhall be very unhappy. My brother is my only informer, and to divert you from the chagrin you appear to ſuffer, I will tell you the ſequel of his communications, which is, that he and Miſs Merton have alſo a penchant for each other."

"I know not," replied Auguſta, "which to laugh at moſt; your brother's vanity, or his pretended diſcovery: But pray tell me on what he founds his hopes of Miſs Merton's favour."

"The apparent embarraſſment of yourſelf, Lord Merton, and Lady Merton," anſwered Miſs Simpſon, "engroſſed our converſation on our way home laſt night; and William, after many hints, which my father did not comprehend, at length plainly ſaid, that Miſs Merton had told him, that Lord Merton was in love with you, and that ſhe rejoiced at it, for that ſhe deſpiſed him, and would inſtantly

inſtantly break off her engagements with him. He then ſaid ſhe was a fine girl, had a fine fortune, and had given him ſuch encouragement, that he did not doubt but that ſhe would ſoon become his wife. He alſo related the words that had paſſed on your account, and called Lord Merton your champion, for he ſaid he had narrowly eſcaped a duel with him.

"My dear Miſs Simpſon," ſaid Auguſta, "I am greatly indebted to you for giving me this information, as it enables me to undeceive you, in that part of the ſtory which relates to myſelf, and to aſſure you, that I believe the reſt of it to be equally exaggerated, or miſrepreſented. There is no attachment between me and Lord Merton; neither did the few words, which his compaſſion, and not his partiality, induced him to ſay in my defence, amount to a quarrel, or ſeem to threaten a duel. Miſs Merton is the affianced wife of Lord Merton; and you will forgive me for ſaying, that it is very improbable ſhe

ſhould wiſh to break through her engagements with him, to form others with Mr. William Simpſon."

"Indeed," replied Miſs Simpſon, "I gave him little credit for it; but my poor father was quite elated at the proſpect of ſuch an union: And you muſt now forgive me in your turn, (continued ſhe,) if I own that I heartily wiſh the whole of this imaginary buſineſs, was to be realized. Lord Merton is worthy to be rewarded with ſuch a woman as yourſelf, and Miſs Merton deſerves to be puniſhed, by marrying a man ſo much her own counterpart, as is my brother."

As ſhe ſpoke this with a laugh, Auguſta gave her no ſerious reply, and they ſoon afterwards bade each other good morning.

Juſt after Miſs Simpſon was gone, Auguſta received a meſſage from Lady Merton, to ſay ſhe wiſhed to ſee her in the breakfaſt parlour.

She

She found Lady Merton, and perceived marks of great agitation in her countenance.

"My dear Miſs Denbeigh," ſaid Lady Merton on her entrance, "I know not how to introduce to you, the occaſion of my aſking the favour of your company. The feelings of a mother, and my reliance on your friendſhip——"

"Tell me, madam," cried Auguſta, interrupting her, yet trembling as ſhe ſpoke, "tell me how I can be ſo fortunate as to prove myſelf deſerving of your kindneſs?"

"Lord Merton has been avowing to me the ſentiments of admiration, which he feels for you, and conſequently the invincible objections he had to the performance of his engagements with Miſs Merton."

"You will not wonder, my dear Miſs Denbeigh," ſaid Lady Merton, "that I have been greatly ſhocked at a declaration

which annihilates at once, the ſchemes ſo many years laid for the aggrandiſement of my family; which expoſes my ſon to the cenſure of diſhonourable conduct, and the relation of my lamented huſband to the imputations which ſuch neglect will not fail to throw upon her. Had not his faith been pledged before he became acquainted with you, I ſhould have applauded a choice, which, though it did not increaſe his fortune, would have enſured his happineſs. The pride of my heart would have been gratified in calling you daughter, and I ſhould have gloried in my ſon, for preferring a humble mediocrity with ſuch a woman, to the moſt ſplendid acquiſitions."

Auguſta bowed, without daring to lift up her eyes, which were indeed ſuffuſed with tears.

Lady Merton continued thus: "Circumſtanced however as Lord Merton is, my approbation can never be given to a preference which would now fix an indelible ſtain upon his

his character; and if I am not miſtaken in that of Miſs Denbeigh, ſhe will never conſent to receive thoſe vows which have been ſo cruelly perjured to another. On this confidence in the rectitude of her principles, my only hope of comfort now reſts; ſince, if Lord Merton is aſſured of her rejection of him, he will ſurely give up this raſh deſertion of Miſs Merton. You are candour itſelf, my dear; and as no delay could be made in an affair of ſuch importance to us all, I was determined, notwithſtanding the remonſtrances of my ſon, to hear your ſentiments. Speak them freely; and though I may be miſtaken in my concluſions, diſavow not the language of your heart."

"Be aſſured, madam," replied Auguſta, "that if you could yourſelf read it, you would find it to correſpond exactly with my expreſſions; and if Lord Merton had ever been explicit to me on the ſubject, he would not now have been a ſtranger to my ſentiments. I do declare then, (continued ſhe, in a firm voice)

voice) that the partiality Lord Merton honours me with, could have obtained from me, no other return than my grateful acknowledgements, even if he had been under no engagements to Miſs Merton: He will therefore judge how impoſſible it is that my reſolutions can ever undergo a change, when his offers to me involve him in an act of injuſtice, which I view in ſo heinous a light, that not all his good qualities could ever re-inſtate him in my opinion."

Lord Merton now entered, and heard the latter part of her ſpeech.

"O Miſs Denbeigh!" cried Lord Merton, "do you then indeed concur with my mother in thinking that the diſpoſition—the behaviour of Miſs Merton affords no excuſe for my breaking off with her? Alas! to what wretchedneſs would you both conſign me."

"And can you, my Lord," anſwered Auguſta, "think yourſelf juſtified in condemning

ing her behaviour, when your own is ſo much more reprehenſible?"

"With the quick penetration of inſulted affection, ſhe has diſcovered the emotions of your mind; the delicacy of her ſex, and the dignity of her character, require that ſhe ſhould reſent the injury which both have ſuſtained. Can you ſay, even if her treatment of you had been more haughty than it is, that you have not deſerved it? O my Lord, reſtore to her but that heart, to which ſhe has an indiſputable right, and her behaviour, releaſed from the conſtraint which well-founded ſuſpicions have impoſed upon it, will appear equally as amiable to you as it has hitherto done. I am perſuaded ſhe loves you:—nay her not being indifferent to the change ſhe has perceived in your ſentiments amply proves it."

"I am not deceived, in the ideas I had formed of what would be your conduct on this occaſion," ſaid Lady Merton, ſeizing the hand

of

of Auguſta; which ſhe condeſcended to preſs to her lips: you are dearer to me than ever."

"And can my mother expect me to witneſs ſuch perfection, and yet ſo eaſily forego the extatic hope of calling ſuch a treaſure mine?" exclaimed Lord Merton. "It is impoſſible! I never can ceaſe to adore Miſs Denbeigh; and I will never conſent to marry Miſs Merton!"

"And will the rejection of the one," replied Lady Merton, "put you in poſſeſſion of the other? And is it thus that my ſon would repay the affectionate ſolicitudes of his parents? Does his duty to a fond mother, his regard to his own character, require no ſtruggle againſt an attachment which is altogether hopeleſs?"

"Not hopeleſs," cried Lord Merton. "O my mother! extricate your unhappy ſon but from the miſery of an union with Miſs Merton, and his ardent devotion to Miſs Denbeigh

beigh will ſurely procure her pity: His whole life ſhall then be entirely employed in gratitude to her, who from the gift of life has not withheld happineſs."

Lady Merton was much affected by this ſolemn appeal to her feelings.

"Merton," ſaid ſhe, "the happineſs of my life depends on that of yours. I leave you to your own choice; but take care in deciding upon your future conduct, that you leave no room for reflection to embitter your peace, ſince the comfort of your mother is involved in it."

Lord Merton, in extacies at this unexpected conceſſion of his mother, threw himſelf upon his knees before her; but could not articulate his thanks. Auguſta, who beheld this ſcene of tenderneſs with great emotion, now roſe from her ſeat, and approaching that of Lady Merton, fell upon one knee by the ſide of Lord Merton.

"Amiable

"Amiable, beſt of mothers, and of friends!" exclaimed ſhe, "ſuffer me thus to bend in gratitude, and in admiration before you! And do you, Lord Merton, deeply as you ſee me impreſſed with a ſenſe of Lady Merton's goodneſs, and the honour you have done me, hear, and receive my irrevocable determination. Had not my heart been occupied by a predeliction in favour of another, I fear my fortitude could not have withſtood that ſtrength of affection which has conquered even the judgment of your mother: But I rejoice in my own miſery, ſince that places an irremediable barrier between us. Yes, my Lord, what nothing elſe but the conflict I now witneſs could have extorted from me, I will now confeſs, I am, like yourſelf, the victim of an unfortunate paſſion. The object of it neither knows, nor ever ſhall know, the influence he poſſeſſes here; but oh, (lifting her ſteaming eyes to heaven) no one elſe can ever ſhare the ſmalleſt portion of my affection!"

Lady

Lady Merton and Lord Merton were ſo ſtruck by her energetic manner, that they neither of them attempted to interrupt her; and ſhe thus proceeded:

"Do not therefore, Lord Merton, ſuffer yourſelf to be deluded by the hope that perſeverance can produce a change in my way of thinking; for whatever trials may await me through life, I will never give my vows to one man, whilſt my heart is in the poſſeſſion of another."

"I will, at leaſt, then," ſaid Lord Merton, mournfully, "imitate your example."

"No," replied Auguſta, "you cannot do it without a crime. Inſignificant and independent as I am, to whom do any of my actions afford an intereſt? I may live for myſelf, ſince I have now no kind friend, whoſe foſtering care has a claim upon my duty, on the renunciation of my own feelings: But you, Sir, are differently ſituated; the laſt deſcendant

ſcendant of a noble family, you owe many duties to them, and to your exalted ſtation. If theſe obligations have loſt their force, there is another motive which I am convinced will have its full weight with you. Conſider that your mother, but a few moments ago, yielded to your ſupplications, and you will not ſurely refuſe to her tenderneſs the ſacrifice which it ſo greatly merits."

"Deareſt Auguſta," cried Lady Merton, raiſing her, and ſtraining her to her boſom, "how much do I regret, that any objections ariſe to prevent my having the happineſs of calling you daughter; but you ſhall be ever to me the firſt and moſt valued friend of my heart."

"If I could not emulate the magnanimity of this excellent creature," ſaid Lord Merton, "I ſhould indeed be unworthy of my mother. If I cannot be bleſſed with her hand, I am indifferent to my fate; give me therefore but a little time, and diſpoſe of me as you pleaſe. I will

will make my peace with Miſs Merton, and obtain her conſent to reviſit the continent, from whence I will try to return wholly obedient to your will."

"Suffer me," ſaid Auguſta, "to oppoſe this deſign. My abſence is the only thing requiſite, and I go from hence to-morrow morning. When a certain happy event has taken place, Lady Merton will reſtore to me her friendly protection."

"Do you imagine," exclaimed Lord Merton with energy, "that I will conſent to ſuch an arrangement? Oh, no! could I ever recover my reaſon, whilſt I reflected that you were made a ſufferer by my folly? Speak, madam, (addreſſing himſelf to Lady Merton) and put a negative to this, or I relapſe again. Friendleſs and lovely as you are, you ſhould not for worlds quit the aſylum my mother's affection affords you."

"No,"

"No," ſaid Lady Merton, "that would ill repay the gratitude I owe to my ſweet Auguſta, and in truth inflict upon myſelf a puniſhment, I could but ill endure. The knowledge Lord Merton has of Miſs Denbeigh's ſentiments, and the promiſes he has given me, inclines me to hope, that all may yet be ſettled without any ſeparation taking place."

"To convince you that my efforts are ſincere," anſwered Lord Merton, "I will go and preſent myſelf at Miſs Merton's dreſſing room door, and try if I can bring her down to dinner in good humour."

When he had left the room, Lady Merton renewed her careſſes of Auguſta, and gave to her conduct every appellation which could ſooth or gratify a mind poſſeſſed of ſuch exquiſite ſenſibility as her's.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXIV.

WHEN the party aſſembled at dinner, they fortunately received an addition by the arrival of two gentlemen, friends to Lord Merton; for otherwiſe, the various reflections which ingroſſed their thoughts, muſt have rendered them very indifferent companions.

Miſs Merton was ſolemn; but as ſhe could evidently perceive that Lord Merton was unhappy, and ſhe imagined it proceeded from his having offended her, ſhe was more complaiſant

plaiſant to him than uſual. She however ſeemed to wiſh that ſhe could forget there was ſuch a perſon in company as Auguſta; and that ſhe might not be reminded of it, averted her eye from the ſide of the table where ſhe was placed. Not that ſhe viewed her in the light of a rival; her vanity had prevented ſuch a ſurmiſe as that.

Her diſlike of Auguſta aroſe merely from her being, as ſhe underſtood, a very inſignificant perſon; and as ſuch, very undeſerving of the diſtinctions which Lady Merton paid her. She believed that rank, fortune and birth were ſolely what could entitle people to reſpect, and ſhe conſequently never paid any to thoſe, who were deſtitute of ſuch recommendations. She had in reality as great a degree of contempt for Mr. William Simpſon as ſhe had for Auguſta; but ſhe had found him, as ſhe thought, an admirer of Miſs Denbeigh's, and believed him now the ſlave of her ſuperior attractions.

Beſides

Beſides this, he adopted all her opinions, however whimſical, for which reaſon ſhe thought him the only civil being ſhe met with at Merton Lodge, and treated him with more cordiality than ſhe ſhewed to any one elſe. This to the ſelf-important Mr. Simpſon, was encouragement enough; and on this ground only, he had boaſted to his father of the probability of his ſucceſs. Could ſhe even have conjectured his preſumptuous hopes, ſhe would have baniſhed him for ever from her preſence; for ſhe had given to his paſſion for her, no other ſentiments, than thoſe of the moſt perfect adoration, which ſhe believed were juſtly her due.

Auguſta received permiſſion from Lady Merton to retire to her own apartment at a very early hour. She had pleaded fatigue, and her countenance plainly told that ſhe wanted reſt; yet this repoſe was not what ſhe retired to enjoy: A buſy ſcene awaited her, and her heart ſunk within her as ſhe aſcended the ſtairs. The taſk ſhe had prepared for

herſelf was no other than the packing up of her cloaths; for ſhe had no ſooner perceived the propriety of quitting Lady Merton's houſe, than ſhe was confirmed in her reſolution to do ſo; and her mind, ever actively intent upon what ſhe believed to be her duty, immediately preſented the plan for her departure.

Previous to her going down to dinner, ſhe had diſpatched a note to the neighbouring town, to order a chaiſe to be at the park gate, at four o'clock the next morning; and as that was an hour ſhe knew none of the family would be ſtirring, ſhe thought ſhe could readily eſcape from the houſe, unobſerved. The only difficulty which occurred was, how to get away her cloaths. This ſhe could not do without the aſſiſtance of the ſervants. To Lady Merton's footman, the man who had left her in town when ſhe had been alarmed by the cry of a mad dog, ſhe therefore applied, and entreated that he would have one of the labourers in waiting, to convey a trunk to

to the porter's lodge, which ſhe told him ſhe was about to ſend to London, by ſome one of the carriages that paſſed that way; and ſhe appointed him to come to her dreſſing-room for it, juſt before the family ſat down to ſupper. As there was no appearance of myſtery in this, the footman promiſed to obey her orders punctually; and indeed if he had been made acquainted with the whole of her deſign, he thought himſelf ſo much obliged to her for her forgiveneſs of a fault which would have occaſioned his being diſcharged from Lady Merton's ſervice, if it had been divulged, that he would have rendered her all the aſſiſtance in his power. The cloaths were ſoon placed in the trunk, and herſelf equipped in a proper dreſs for travelling; and about ten o'clock the two men arrived and conveyed it from her apartment.

She now ſat down to her writing table, and began an epiſtle to Lady Merton; but her tears fell ſo faſt, that it was with difficulty ſhe could purſue her employment, and ſhe could

not find words adequate to expreſs the various ideas which crowded into her mind. Diſſatisfied with her letter, yet doubtful if ſhe could write a better, ſhe at length ſealed it, and addreſſed it to Lady Merton. It contained the following words:

" I yield to the neceſſity of a cruel deſtiny, and quit the manſion of my beloved and honoured benefactreſs. Ah, madam! could you witneſs the agonies which I endure at this moment, you would own, that a high ſenſe of duty could alone ſupport me in the conflict. Friendleſs, and unknown, you reſcued me from impending evils, and poured the balm of affectionate pity into my wounded heart. Can any ſufferings I undergo be too great for the obligations I owe you? Ought I not, even with my life, to preſerve the peace of her from whom all mine has long been derived? I am the guiltleſs diſturber of the happineſs of your family; but I truſt, my voluntary exile from it, will be the means of reſtoring that harmony which I have unfortunately interrupted.

rupted. Your ſon need not now quit his inеſtimable Mother—and Miſs Merton will no longer be tormented with the ſight of an object, which I believe, though I know not from what cauſe, has been extremely diſguſting to her. All endeavours to diſcover the retirement I have choſen will be fruitleſs; and I therefore hope none will be made. The joyful news of Lord Merton's marriage can alone induce me to quit it: When I ſhall fly to regain the felicity I now forego, and devote to my beſt and only friend the remainder of that life, which ſuch a hope alone renders deſirable to her unhappy

AUGUSTA DENBEIGH."

Auguſta now drew up her window curtains, and throwing herſelf into a chair, ſat watching the approach of morning. The ſtable clock at length told the hour of four, when ſhe quitted her chamber, and treading lightly, ſoon gained the hall; the door of which ſhe eaſily unbarred, and cloſing it gent-

ly after her, traverſed the lawn with a quick pace. She found the chaiſe at the park gate, and bidding the driver awake the woman who kept the lodge, for the trunk, and then make the beſt of his way towards London, ſhe drew up the blinds. At firſt ſhe began to congratulate herſelf, on having ſo well effected her departure; but the ſpirits which ſupported her on the occaſion being exhauſted, her reflections ſoon took a different turn, and ſhe began to view the ſtep ſhe had taken with more rigid ſcrutiny. Although acting from an impulſe of conſcious rectitude, ſhe began to fear that her judgment might have involved her in errour. The manner of her quitting Lady Merton's houſe, had in it ſomething ſo extremely romantic, that ſhe ſhrunk from the contemplation of it: next, the buſtle it would occaſion, and the conjectures that would be formed by thoſe who were ignorant of the cauſe, preſented themſelves to her ſickened imagination: And laſtly, though not leaſt, the conſtructions which Mr. William Simpſon and Miſs Merton might put upon her flight.

ſlight. Ought ſhe not to have ſtaid and obtained the permiſſion of Lady Merton, to her leaving her? Yet the impetuoſity of Lord Merton ſeemed to render that impracticable, and the attempt might have produced conſequences more unpleaſant to each. Thus by turns accuſing and juſtifying herſelf, did the poor traveller paſs her time; and if ſhe could not give a decided acquital to her own conduct, the reflection, that her intentions had a moral baſis, at leaſt preſerved her from that moſt dreadful of all ſentences, *ſelf condemnation.*

Lady Merton roſe late that morning, and being anxious to know how Auguſta was, ſhe tapped at her door. No reply being made, ſhe opened it, and her conſternation was inexpreſſibly great, when ſhe perceived that ſhe had not been in bed. She paſſed haſtily into her dreſſing room, and her eye inſtantly caught the letter addreſſed to herſelf, which lay on the writing table. She trembled ſo violently that ſhe opened it with difficulty;

and when she had read it she pressed it to her lips, and then went in search of Lord Merton. She found him walking in the shrubbery, and in so deep a reverie, that he did not perceive her till she spoke. She held out the letter and said, "This magnanimous girl has left us."

"Good God!" exclaimed Lord Merton, who instantly conceived who his mother meant, "Where can she go? I will directly pursue, and restore her to you."

"No," said Lady Merton, "her generous designs shall not be frustrated. She is mistress of herself, and could have left us whenever she chose; but she has adopted this mode, even though it has exposed her to malevolent suspicions, rather than contest a point in a way in which she knew she could not succeed. Read her letter. Excellent creature! It shall indeed be my care to render her future days happy."

Lord

Lord Merton returned the letter to his mother, but ſpoke not.

"I wiſh," ſaid ſhe, "if poſſible, to conceal, eſpecially from Miſs Merton, that Miſs Denbeigh quitted us without our knowledge. What can be done?"

"My dear mother," replied Lord Merton, "I am ſo completely wretched, that I am alike incapable of judging or acting as I ought. All that I can at preſent ſay, is that I ſhall quit England in a day or two; and that if you wiſh the reſtoration of my peace of mind, you will then take this lovely friendleſs girl under your protection again."

The ſettled melancholy with which he ſpoke this, deterred Lady Merton from purſuing the ſubject farther. She therefore only re-urged caution before Miſs Merton, and they proceeded to the breakfaſt parlour.

The caution was however wholly unneceſſary, for Miſs Merton ſeemed not to be aware that Auguſta was abſent, and made no inquiries after her. She aſked Lord Merton if he had not an head ach. He anſwered, "Yes; for that he had received letters which had diſturbed him, and he feared he ſhould be obliged to return to the Continent for a month or ſix weeks."

Fortunately ſhe placed this melancholy to the account of his leaving her; and had therefore no ſuſpicions of the real cauſe of it.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXV.

AUGUSTA arrived in London without meeting with any accident, and was ſet down at Mrs. Mills's in Bond-ſtreet. The good women was quite rejoiced to ſee her, "For," ſaid ſhe, "my brother and ſiſter are making conſtant inquiries after you, and I knew not how to anſwer them. David and Mary, they write me word, can get no peace, becauſe they have not heard any thing about you for ſo long a time."

Auguſta ſatisfied herſelf about the health and wellfare of theſe faithful friends, and then ſuffered herſelf to be conducted by Mrs. Mills into her dining room, which occupied the front of the houſe on the ſecond floor; who perceiving her to be greatly fatigued, propoſed ſhe ſhould take the refreſhment of a diſh of tea, and then go to bed. This advice was gladly purſued by Auguſta, and ſhe ſoon conſigned herſelf to that repoſe, which ſhe ſtood ſo much in need of.

Mrs. Mills's houſe was neat, and there was an appearance of comfort in her family, which ſomewhat tranquillized the agitated ſpirits of Auguſta: Yet as this could not be a permanent ſituation, and ſhe knew her finances to be inadequate to her ſupport, without ſome efforts of induſtry, ſhe determined to ſpeak, without reſerve, of her ſituation, to Mrs. Mills.

"I ſuppoſe," ſaid ſhe to her one day, when they were alone, "that your friends have

have told you I am poor, or in the language of the world, in diſtreſs. I rely upon your kindneſs to point out to me ſome creditable employment, by which I can procure a livelihood; and if ſuch an one can be found, as will enable me to remain in your lodgings, I ſhall be happy; otherwiſe, I muſt ſoon remove to ſome more humble, and better adapted to my circumſtances."

Mrs. Mills, who in the early part of her life had felt the "chilling gripe of poverty," was far unlike the generality of thoſe, who having made a fortune by ſome lucky chance, in a forgetfulneſs of the evils they have endured, grow callous to the wants of others. Her mind retained all its primitive ſimplicity, notwithſtanding ſhe had been grand prieſteſs at the altar of faſhion, or in other words, a milliner, for upwards of forty years; during which time ſhe had fairly amaſſed as much money as ſatisfied her ambition, and now began to think of retiring from buſineſs.

The manner of Auguſta, perhaps more than her ſpeech, added to the little ſhe knew of her hiſtory, excited the ſympathy of the kind hearted Mrs. Mills.

"My dear young Lady," replied ſhe, "ſet your mind at reſt at preſent. The goodneſs of the Almighty, ſeconded by my own endeavours, have bleſſed me with more than I want; and I reſtore but part, to him who gave all, when I afford ſuccour to the unfortunate. I have no uſe for my rooms, and you are welcome to remain here till you can do better. Something will offer to you in time, and till it does, make yourſelf as happy as you can."

Auguſta was much affected by this diſintereſted proof of the goodneſs of Mrs. Mills's diſpoſition. She made her acknowledgments in the livelieſt terms; but would conſent to treſpaſs upon her no longer than until ſhe could eſtabliſh herſelf in ſome way or other.

Reading, work, and drawing of patterns for Mrs. Mills's people to embroider from, now entirely filled upon Auguſta's time, as ſhe could never be prevailed upon to go abroad, except upon a Sunday, when ſhe regularly attended Mrs. Mills to the neareſt church, to hear divine ſervice. As they were returning home one Sunday morning, through a little alley, which ſhortened their walk, a miſerable object ſolicited their relief. The ſight of the man convinced Auguſta of the extent of his wretchedneſs; and though poor herſelf, the comparative view of her own affluence ſtruck her ſo forcibly, that ſhe drew a guinea from her purſe, and held it out to him. The poor wretch, enfeebled by ſickneſs as well as want, in his eager haſte to ſeize a ſum which had not for a long time met his eye, fell to the ground. Auguſta gave a loud ſhriek, believing that he had fallen dead at her feet; and her cry brought a woman from a cellar, who, if poſſible, ſurpaſſed the former object, in the miſery of her appearance. Her weakneſs was ſo great, that her efforts to raiſe him

him were ineffectual; neither could he aſſiſt himſelf: Auguſta entreated Mrs. Mills to aid her in lifting him up, and then deſcended into the cellar with theſe two unfortunate aſſociates in human wretchedneſs. So dreary an abode her eyes had never yet beheld: A bed of ſtraw in one corner, and a kettle, in which a few potatoes had been boiled, conſtituted the whole furniture.

"Is it an angel," cried the man, in a hollow voice. "See here," giving the guinea to the woman.

"Lay out that," ſaid Auguſta, "inſtantly in ſomething that may adminiſter to your recovery, and I will ſee you again, and inquire into your further wants."

They both lifed up their hands and bleſſed her.

"There are houſes near," ſaid Mrs. Mills, from which you may procure meat and broth;

broth; Which of you is beſt able to fetch it?"

The man inſiſted upon going, and Auguſta and Mrs. Mills remained with the woman until he returned. She then told them that her huſband was in the laſt ſtage of a conſumption; that he was a native of Ireland, and that ſhe, though an Engliſhwoman, had no friends to apply to, having forfeited their countenance by marrying as ſhe did; that their diſtreſſes had reduced him to the employment of a chairman, which his increaſing ill health had obliged him to give up; and that ſince then their cloaths and furniture had all been pawned, to procure them ſuſtenance. Want, watching, and fatigue, ſhe ſaid, had brought on a fever which had reduced her to the ſituation they ſaw her in; and that ſhe had indeed prayed hourly, to be releaſed, with her poor huſband.

Auguſta quitted them, with an aſſurance, that they ſhould ſoon ſee her again; and when ſhe

ſhe arrived in Bond-ſtreet, ſhe begged of Mrs. Mills to ſend for her apothecary; to whom ſhe related their morning adventure, and entreated of him to viſit the poor wretches, and ſee if any thing could be done for them, by proper medical aſſiſtance.

He ſoon returned, and informed her, that the woman might ſoon grow well by taking bark and good nouriſhment; but that the man could not long ſurvive. She commiſſioned him to ſend the medicines and cordials he thought requiſite, and determined to ſee them again the next morning.

At an early hour, and attended by a maid ſervant of Mrs. Mills's, who carried them ſeveral articles of apparel, which her miſtreſs had ſent, Auguſta ſallied forth to viſit this abode of miſery again. She found both the man and his wife ſo much better, that her heart was dilated with happineſs at the ſervice ſhe had rendered two fellow creatures. She charged the woman to come to her often, both

both to tell her how they went on, and what they wanted; adding that ſhe would continue to aſſiſt them, until ſhe could place them in a way of doing for themſelves. Their gratitude was unbounded; and Auguſta departed, loaded with their prayers and bleſſings.

As ſhe had now been near a month in London, ſhe began anxiouſly to turn her thoughts to the event which ſhe hoped might by that time have taken place at Merton Lodge. As the newſpapers were her only ſource of information, ſhe daily examined them with ſome care. One day her eye caught an advertiſement for the creditors of a certain banker, to apply for a dividend which was to be made of his effects, and ſhe thought the name was the ſame ſhe had ſeen in the ſecurity ſhe had in her poſſeſſion from Mr. Euſton's banker. She examined and compared her papers with the advertiſement, and was convinced they were both the ſame; and not knowing how ſhe was to act, or indeed whether ſhe could

could make a claim, ſhe determined to conſult Mrs. Mills.

Mrs. Mills, almoſt as great a ſtranger to thoſe ſort of things as Auguſta, adviſed her to apply to an attorney; and was made ſo happy by the proſpect of her good fortune, which ſhe ſaid ſhe had prognoſticated, that ſhe inſtantly ſet out with the writings to a lawyer of her acquaintance, who promiſed her to make the neceſſary inquiries the following day, and inform his client of the reſult of them.

Mrs. Davies, which was the name of Auguſta's penſioner, called upon her in the evening, and with tears told her, that her poor huſband, now declined rapidly. Auguſta knew there were no hopes of his life, and therefore would not deceive her by deluſive expectations. She rather tried to prepare her for the worſt; and in order to ſupply comfort to her drooping ſpirits, told her, that Mrs. Mills had promiſed ſhe would conſtantly

ly employ her in work, ſo that ſhe might earn a good livelihood in her widowed ſtate; and that ſhe would always be a friend to her. She diſmiſſed her with another mark of her benevolence, and bade her to get ſome of the people of the houſe to ſit up with her, for they had before this removed into a more comfortable lodging. That night the poor man died, and his laſt breath was ſpent in prayers for Auguſta, who gave orders for him to be buried in a decent way, and gave his widow wherewith to buy herſelf mourning.

She had but juſt diſmiſſed the perſon who brought her the news of Davis's death, with this meſſage, when Mrs. Mills entered the room, her eyes ſparkling with pleaſure.

"My dear young Lady," cried ſhe, "God never ſuffers ſuch good actions to go unrewarded. Here is Lawyer Manſal below in my parlour, and he ſays you will recover fifteen hundred pounds from the banker. Pray

Pray come to him. If it were as many thouſands you deſerve it all."

Auguſta ſmiled at her kind friend; and almoſt doubting ſome miſtake in this flattering account, followed her down ſtairs.

Mr. Manſal then informed her, that there was a dividend to be made of ten ſhillings in the pound, and that as her debt was three thouſand pounds, ſhe would conſequently receive fifteen hundred. She returned him her thanks for the alacrity with which he had communicated the news to her; and after ſhe had given him inſtructions to receive the money for her, and place it out at intereſt, he took his leave.

Whoever had ſeen Mrs. Mills would have concluded, that ſhe were the perſon benefitted by this diſcovery, inſtead of Auguſta, ſo great was the exuberance of her joy: but indeed, Auguſta's ſweet and amiable manners, together with her goodneſs, had made ſo great an intereſt

in the heart of Mrs. Mills, that ſhe might literally be ſaid to doat upon her.

"As I am now ſo rich," ſaid Auguſta, laughing, "it is right that I ſettle my debt of gratitude to you, though I never can repay all that I owe you; your kindneſs to me has exceeded any return I can make: However, you muſt now conſider me the regular tenant for your rooms, and fix the ſtipend I am annually to pay you, from the day you received me into your houſe."

"Indeed, madam," replied Mrs. Mills, "if you talk ſo, I ſhall think I have offended you. Our agreement was, that you ſhould remain here until ſomething fell out that was more agreeable. I ſhould have kept my word if it had not happened theſe dozen years; and yet you break yours."

"How ſo?" ſaid Auguſta. "Has not the moſt unexpected good fortune really befallen me?"

"Yes,"

"Yes," anſwered Mrs. Mills; "but you are not bettered by it yet. From the day on which you receive your fifteen hundred pounds, I will date your commencing my boarder: And I cannot in conſcience do it an hour ſooner."

Auguſta could not contend againſt the ſcruples of this good woman; ſhe however prevailed upon her to mention the ſum ſhe was to pay, which was moderate, and inſtantly acceded to.

Mrs. Davies was ſoon ſettled in a neat little room, near to Mrs. Mills's, from whoſe ſhop ſhe had a conſtant ſupply of work. She owned herſelf to have been much employed in millinery formerly, and indeed, from her converſation and ingenuity, Auguſta began to ſuſpect that ſhe had been brought up in ſome way ſuperiour to her appearance; but as ſhe always evaded this ſubject, Auguſta deſiſted from queſtioning her. Her gratitude, and indeed

indeed her whole deportment was ſo pleaſing, that her patroneſs every day grew more partial to her, and felicitated herſelf on having ſaved ſo worthy a creature from deſtruction.

All this time ſhe gained no intelligence of the Merton family; and at length her impatience became ſo great, ſhe aſked Mrs. Mills if ſhe could deviſe any means to make inquiries after them, without its being ſuſpected, from what quarter they were made.

Mrs. Mills told her nothing was more eaſy, for that without doubt a ſervant muſt be left to take care of the houſe in town, and under pretence of buſineſs, ſhe could readily learn how they all were. Auguſta then gave her her commiſſion, which was to inquire after the health of Lady Merton, and whether ſhe was expected in London early in the enſuing winter; and alſo, whether Lord Merton was married; or if not, how ſoon his marriage was to take place. The latter part of her inſtructions confirmed Mrs. Mills in a ſuſpi-

cion ſhe had long entertained of Auguſta's being in love; for her declining all company, and never going abroad, convinced the good woman that ſhe was not happy, and to any other cauſe than love ſhe knew not now how to attribute her not being ſo. In a mind ſo well diſpoſed as hers, pity was always the moſt predominent ſenſation; and ſhe therefore determined to get every thing out of the ſervant, which related to Lord Merton, that Auguſta might not be diſappointed of the information which ſhe believed her moſt anxious about.

On her arrival at Lady Merton's houſe, in Argyle-ſtreet, the door was opened by an elderly woman, of whom ſhe inquired when her Lady would be in town.

"Not ſoon that ſhe knew of," was the reply.

Mrs. Mills then aſked how ſhe did; and added that ſhe ſuppoſed the wedding of Lord

Lord Merton would detain her in the country.

The ſervant anſwered, that the wedding, ſhe ſuppoſed, was put off, for that Lord Merton was gone abroad.

"That, I fear," ſaid Mrs. Mills, "will make his mother very unhappy."

"Without doubt," the women replied, "ſomething muſt be the matter between them; for that the young Lord had come to town, and been all alone in that houſe for ſeveral days before he went away, and looked very melancholy."

"Aye, aye," cried Mrs. Mills, who ſpoke however from mere conjecture, and from the hope of hearing ſomething that would pleaſe Auguſta, "they want to marry him to a Lady he does not like, I ſuppoſe."

"Belike enough," replied the woman; "and for the matter of that, I did hear Tom, my Lord's footman, ſay, that he was ſure my Lord had rather have Miſs Denbeigh, who is more prettier a good deal than Miſs Merton, and ſo good humoured, that ſhe is not above ſpeaking to any of her own fleſh and blood."

"And, pray," aſked Mrs. Mills, "where is Miſs Merton now?"

"With my Lady, I believe," replied the woman.

"And pray where is Lord Merton?"

"At ſome outlandiſh place that I have forgot," ſaid ſhe; "but I know Tom ſaid he did not think my Lord would come back in a hurry; and indeed he cannot, for it is over ſea that he's gone, that I'm ſure of."

"I ſhall

"I ſhall wiſh to know when your Lady returns to town," ſaid Mrs. Mills, willing to prepare a future reception for herſelf, "and I will therefore call again." She then bade the woman good morning.

Before ſhe had reached Bond-ſtreet, ſhe had entirely ſettled all theſe circumſtances in her own mind: And as her great partiality for Miſs Denbeigh led her to think that ſhe was deſerving of any Lord whatever, ſhe became incenſed againſt Lady Merton, for wiſhing her ſon to marry any other woman, whilſt his heart was Auguſta's. She firſt briefly related, that Lady Merton was in the country, and that Lord Merton was gone abroad.

"Abroad!" exclaimed Auguſta, "to be married? Has he taken his lady with him?"

"No, indeed," replied Mrs. Mills. "Miſs Merton is at the lodge with her Ladyſhip, and from what I can learn, you

have no reaſon to fear that ſhe will ever become the wife of Lord Merton."

"What is it you tell me?" cried Auguſta. "Pray relate to me all that you heard."

"The ſervant," anſwered Mrs. Mills, "was a very civil woman; ſo ſhe told me that her Lord would not ſtay in England, and be married to Miſs Merton, becauſe he was in love with another lady. She ſaid he was ſo ill that he was confined to the houſe for ſome days before he went abroad; and that his man told her he was ſure they ſhould not come back of a long time. What a cruel mother Lady Merton muſt be," continued Mrs. Mills; "but if you wiſh it, madam, I am ſure I can find out my Lord's direction."

"By no means," replied Auguſta, bluſhing at the inference which ſhe plainly perceived Mrs. Mills had made, "My ſolicitude is on

on the poor mother's account, who is far from being the cruel parent you ſuppoſe her."

This aſſurance Mrs. Mills did not at all credit, though ſhe affected to believe it. However, as it convinced her that Auguſta did not mean to repoſe a confidence in her, ſhe very properly dropped the ſubject.

This account, which Auguſta could not doubt the truth of, greatly afflicted her. The diſappointment of Lady Merton; the illneſs and exile of Lord Merton, were ſufficient to render her unhappy; but when added to theſe ſhe contemplated the little chance there appeared of her being ſoon re-united to her friend, and that the report of Lord Merton's being attached to her, which ſhe found from Mrs. Mills, was ſpoken of in the family, might for ever prevent her being ſo, her anguiſh became ſtill more accute. To purſue her preſent mode of life—to live without enjoying the beauties of the creation—to be debarred from the refined pleaſures which the

ſociety of an enlightened friend can alone beſtow; was but to drag on a wretched exiſtence. Yet how could it be avoided? She had no wiſh to mix in the ſociety now within her reach; and the want of a proper introduction prevented her having acceſs to any other: Beſides, even if that could be obtained, it would only throw her in the way of Lady Merton, and prove that her boaſted retirement was merely oſtentatious. Often, during this melancholy review of her ſituation, did the idea of returning to thoſe ſcenes which had alone witneſſed her happineſs, preſent itſelf to her: Yet, alas! what could ſhe now meet with there, but objects which would renew her grief, without affording a balm for it. The little pleaſure ſhe had received from an intercourſe with the world, almoſt tempted her to renounce it; but her heart, ſhe knew not why, recoiled from the thought. Theſe reflections ſo perpetually preſented themſelves, that a melancholy imperceptibly ſtole upon her, which ſhe was unconſcious of, and therefore did not ſtrive to reſiſt. Mrs. Mills however

ever ſoon perceived the alteration which ſo viſibly took place, and attributing it to the unfortunate partiality which ſhe believed to exiſt between Lord Merton and Miſs Denbeigh, ſhe unceaſingly propoſed ſome amuſements, which ſhe hoped might divert her thoughts into a different channel.

No perſuaſions however could induce Auguſta to viſit the places of public reſort, which Mrs. Mills would have recommended. Her langour daily increaſed, and Mrs. Mills became ſo much alarmed that ſhe propoſed her going into the country, for change of ſcene and air.

She told her that a widow lady, a cuſtomer of hers, who had loſt her huſband, in the ſervice of the Empreſs of Ruſſia, and who had a neat little houſe at Brompton, wiſhed to take ſome lady to board with her, and had actually applied to her, to recommend ſuch a one. The good woman almoſt with tears entreated Auguſta to go there for a ſhort time;

adding that her avocations would not permit her to attend to her as ſhe could wiſh; that Mrs. Brudenell was a cheerful good ſort of perſon, and ſhe was ſure would do every thing in her power to make her happy, and accompany her to take the air in Kenſington gardens, near to which her houſe was ſituated.

The laſt ſuggeſtion had ſome weight with Auguſta, who had attributed her indiſpoſition entirely to the want of exerciſe; and ſhe at length ſuffered her kind friend to negociate the matter with Mrs. Brudenell. A few days ſufficed for this, and ſhe ſoon removed to Brompton. She was rather ſurpriſed at the appearance of Mrs. Brudenell, who was dreſſed with extreme elegance, and had the remains of much beauty; for ſhe had figured to herſelf a retired, quiet character, with manners and habit correſponding to the loſs ſhe had ſuſtained, of a huſband whom ſhe had doated upon. Her reception of Auguſta was eaſy and friendly, and ſhe ſeemed diſpoſed to treat her with unreſerved kindneſs.

This

This was flattering to Auguſta, and in part contributed to obliterate the unfavourable impreſſion which the firſt ſight of her had given, for there was in fact a certain boldneſs in the manners of Mrs. Brudenell, which had been to her exceſſively diſguſting. The neatneſs of the garden, now blooming with autumnal flowers; the green fields, and in the back ground, the tall trees of Kenſington Gardens, already teinted with the variegated and beautiful hues of approaching winter, gave emotions of pleaſure, long a ſtranger to her mind.

She took poſſeſſion of the neat apartment aſſigned to her, and from her window contemplated theſe objects with a degree of luxury, until ſhe was ſummoned down ſtairs to dinner.

Mrs. Brudenell propoſed cards in the evening, but as Auguſta was unacquainted with the uſe of them, they ſat at their work, and paſſed it pleaſantly enough in converſation.

Mrs. Brudenell's mind was not of the ſpeculative ſort, neither was it ſtored with that kind of information which is to be derived from books; but ſhe had abundant knowledge in the articles of news, dreſs, and faſhion, and could relate anecdotes, or give the private hiſtory of moſt of the great families in the kingdom.

As Auguſta had not the vanity to think ſhe poſſeſſed talents to amuſe Mrs. Brudenell, ſhe had the complacency to be amuſed by her; or at leaſt to appear ſo: For the tranſactions of people, to whoſe very names ſhe was a ſtranger, could neither arreſt her attention, or intereſt her feelings.

The morning was lovely, and the ladies paſſed part of it in Kenſington gardens: and thus, with the interruption only of a viſit now and then, from the few neighbours who aſſociated with Mrs. Brudenell, glided away a month; in which time Auguſta's health was conſiderably amended. Mrs. Brudenell had indeed

indeed often ſolicited her to go to town, and profeſſed that ſhe was particularly fond of a play; but her reſolution could not be ſhaken; ſhe declined her importunities however in a manner that prevented the poſſibility of an offence.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXVI.

THEIR walks had been hitherto taken at ſo early an hour, that they had ſeldom met many perſons, eſpecially thoſe of a faſhionable appearance; but the weather having one day prevented their going out at the uſual time, it was ſo late before they arrived in Kenſington Gardens, that Hyde-Park appeared crowded with company. Auguſta wiſhed to turn into thoſe walks which were not ſo much within view of the people who were riding; but Mrs. Brudenell profeſſed

ſed herſelf ſo much diverted with the droll figures that were exhibiting themſelves, that ſhe could not be prevailed upon to leave the ſcene of ſo much amuſement. At length a groupe of gay young men rode very near them, and ſeemed to obſerve them ſo particularly, that Auguſta began to be alarmed, and preſſed Mrs. Brudenell ſeriouſly to return home; and her conſternation became great, when ſhe ſoon afterwards ſaw that they had quitted their horſes, and entered the garden. Mrs. Brudenell laughed at her fears, and was for proceeding; but ſhe inſiſted upon turning back, and the other was obliged to comply. Notwithſtanding they walked faſt, they were ſoon overtaken by the gentlemen, who then kept their pace, as if they were determined to join them. They frequently whiſpered each other, and then burſt into a loud laugh; and it was evident that each was urging the other, to begin a converſation. At length one, who fancied himſelf perhaps the beſt qualified for the taſk, cried out, "Egad, ladies,

ladies, you are the beſt walkers I have met with."

"And you," retorted Mrs. Brudenell, "are the moſt troubleſome companions we have ever ſeen."

Auguſta was extremely hurt at this reply; for ſilent contempt, ſhe thought, would beſt have checked the impertinence of theſe obtruſive young men.

"Oh," exclaimed another of the gentlemen, "can we do otherwiſe than purſue when you fly."

"If you had good manners," replied Mrs. Brudenell, "you would at leaſt deſiſt when you ſee how diſagreeable it is to us."

"I," ſaid the firſt ſpeaker, looking at the terrified Auguſta, "ſhall receive my diſmiſſal from that Lady only; whoſe lovely mouth,

mouth, I am ſure, cannot pronounce ſo cruel a ſentence."

"Her eyes," ſaid Mrs. Brudenell, "might convince you of the diſpleaſure you have given her, although ſhe is ſilent."

"Her eyes!" exclaimed he, in affected rapture, "they dart forth ſo many attractions, that curſe me if I could not ſooner die at her feet than leave her."

This horrid ſpeech had ſo great an effect on Auguſta, that Mrs. Brudenell could hardly ſupport her, ſhe trembled ſo violently.

"I'll tell you what," ſaid Mrs. Brudenell, "if you don't leave us, I ſhall call to the ſentinel."

Here the gentlemen all ſet up a loud laugh; and one who had not ſpoke before, ſaid, "I ſhould like to ſee the ſpirit of this ſilent friend

friend moved; but thou, I am ſure, couldſt not be guilty of ſo uncharitable an act."

"You ſhall ſoon be convinced of that," replied ſhe, quickening her pace, as they were now within ſight of the entrance to the garden.

"Come along," ſaid the gentleman who had firſt ſpoken, ſhe is faithful to her truſt, and there is no getting a word from her pretty companion." And ſo ſaying, they turned off another way.

Auguſta's fears had not ſubſided, even when they reached Mrs. Brudenell's houſe, who rallied her on her want of ſpirits, and told her ſuch things frequently occurred when ladies walked without a protector of the other ſex. This however did not reconcile her to the circumſtance, for ſhe had frequently walked with Lady Merton, and in theſe very gardens, without meeting with an inſult; and ſhe began to ſuſpect that there was ſomething

of

of a levity in the air of her companion, which had invited it. The fearleſs way in which ſhe had entered into converſation with the gentlemen, confirmed her in her ſuſpicions, and ſhe determined to be more upon her guard in future. Indeed ſhe ſcrupled not to ſay, that ſhe would walk no more in Kenſington Gardens, at an hour when ſuch ſort of people were abroad, and that ſhe wiſhed, if any body accoſted them in ſuch a way again, that Mrs. Brudenell would give them no reply. Mrs. Brudenell proteſted, that but for her reſolution, ſhe believed they ſhould not have got rid of them ſo eaſily; but promiſed to do as Auguſta wiſhed her another time.

Mrs. Mills now made a viſit to Auguſta; and the good creature had again been to Argyle-ſtreet, that ſhe might carry her ſome further information of the Merton family. She had learnt from the ſervant, that news had arrived of Lord Merton's being in a bad ſtate of health, and that his mother was ill in conſequence of it. That Miſs Merton was

ſtill

ſtill with Lady Merton, and took on her mightily, as the woman ſaid, "for that no one ever believed, ſhe loved my Lord at all." She added that if her Lady grew better, ſhe meant to go abroad to her ſon, and that it was imagined Miſs Merton would accompany her. Although this was news which Mrs. Mills believed would not prove very acceptable, yet ſhe related it faithfully, being willing that Auguſta ſhould know the worſt.

It was indeed a dreadful piece of intelligence to her. She longed to preſent herſelf to Lady Merton, to ſooth her diſtreſſes, and to ſupport her on the bed of ſickneſs. But Miſs Merton was with her,—and her appearance muſt therefore be improper. Miſerable, however, as ſhe felt, to hear ſomething more of the real ſituation of her beloved friend, ſhe could deviſe no other means to obtain it, but by writing; which ſhe inſtantly ſet about, her letter was as follows:

"How

" How ſhall I deſcribe to my dear Lady Merton the anguiſh of mind which I ſuffer from the dreadful news which has juſt been conveyed to me: I am told that you are ill—that Lord Merton has left England, and that he alſo is in a bad ſtate of health. Is it poſſible! Can the good God who gave to a friendleſs orphan ſuch a benevolent ſupporter, have made her eventually the cauſe of ſo much miſery! Oh, madam, relieve me from the agonies I ſuffer, by telling me that you are better, and by laying your commands upon me, if any thing in my power can contribute to the reſtoration of your peace. Gladly would I lay down a life ſufficiently imbittered by the affliction it occaſions others, to enſure comfort to your future days! I ſhall ſend every evening into Argyle-ſtreet, in hopes that you will direct a letter to be left for me there. Your benevolent mind, will I am ſure, receive pleaſure in hearing, that ſome extraordinary coincidence of fortune, have rendered me independent, and placed me with worthy people.

" Dear-

" Deareſt Lady Merton, until ſhe hears from you, how wretched will be the exiſtence of

Your

AUGUSTA DENBEIGH."

Mrs. Mills conveyed this letter to town, and promiſed that it ſhould be depoſited in the poſt office that very night: She likewiſe engaged to ſend a meſſenger with the reply, to Brompton, the very moment it ſhould came into her poſſeſſion.

The third morning from that was the earlieſt day in which Auguſta could expect an anſwer: Time never paſſed ſo tediouſly with her before. Indeed her muſic (for ſhe had procured a piano forte) her books, and her work, were all thrown aſide, and ſhe ſpent the whole day in anxiouſly watching for the appearance of a meſſenger, although it was totally impoſſible for ſuch a one to arrive ſo ſoon.

ſoon. At length, however, ſhe perceived Mrs. Mills approach the houſe, and received from her a letter: But what ſhe had been waiting for with ſuch extreme impatience, now that ſhe had it in poſſeſſion, ſhe hardly durſt look at, ſo greatly fearful was ſhe of having the bad news confirmed. She retired to her own room, and found the following lines:

" Your letter, my dear Miſs Denbeigh, has eaſed my heart of one of its many ſolicitudes; for to quit the kingdom, without knowing that you were comfortably ſituated, and without giving you an aſſurance of my unceaſing regard, gave me inexpreſſible pain. Yes, my ſweet and meritorious friend! the magnanimity of your conduct, and your attention to my happineſs, demand from me all that gratitude and affection ought to pay to ſuch exalted goodneſs. The news of my ſon's illneſs, and my ignorance of your fate, brought on an indiſpoſition from which however I am now recovering ſo faſt, that I hope to be able to

to ſet out for Nice, where Merton is, in leſs than a fortnight. Do not torment yourſelf, my dear Miſs Denbeigh, with the idea that you have occaſioned me any calamities. Human foreſight cannot diſcover the deſigns of an ever-guiding Providence, which, when it appears to afflict us moſt, is bringing about the means of our felicity. The illneſs of my ſon, and the ſtate of danger to which I have been reduced, has wrought ſuch a change in Miſs Merton, that I am firmly perſuaded we ſhall all rejoice in our ſufferings. She has attended me with unremitting tenderneſs; and ſhed ſo many tears for Merton, that I am convinced her heart is entirely his. She firſt propoſed our journey to Nice; and the proof it will give my ſon of her attachment to him, which he has hitherto doubted, I know will have its proper influence on ſo generous a mind as his.

"I ſo frequently repeated your name during my illneſs, that Miſs Merton entreated my permiſſion to ſend for you; which I however re-

refuſed; and perhaps for the only reaſon which could have induced me to do ſo, the not knowing where to direct a meſſenger to you. She really ſhared in the pleaſure your letter gave me; and as I am ſtill too weak to leave my bed for any length of time, ſhe offered to be my amenuenſis, adding that her behaviour to you had been ſo rude and unkind, that I might fear to truſt her; but, that ſhe was conſcious of her fault, and would avail herſelf of the opportunity to entreat your pardon. This proper ſenſe of her former follies, gives me firm hopes that Merton's affection for her may be revived; and that their marriage may take place, before we return to England. It is then that I ſhall claim the promiſe of my moſt dear Miſs Denbeigh; whoſe ſociety will beſtow the ſincereſt pleaſure on her

Affectionate and maternal friend,

THEODOSIA MERTON."

" P. S. Let me hear from you before I I go, and give me your addreſs, that I may write to you during my abſence."

Auguſta peruſed this epiſtle ſeveral times before ſhe could be perſuaded of its reality; and her joy was great in proportion to the anxiety ſhe had before ſuffered. She diſpatched a letter to Lady Merton, by Mrs. Mills, in which ſhe gave way to the emotions which now agitated her mind. She alſo acquainted Lady Merton with her preſent ſituation, and the means by which ſhe had become poſſeſſed of fifteen hundred pounds; and deſired her letters might be addreſſed to her at Mrs. Mills's, in Bond-ſtreet, from whence ſhe ſaid they would immediately be forwarded to her.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXVII.

RELIEVED from the inquietudes which had ſo long preyed upon her ſpirits, Auguſta's health and natural cheerfulneſs ſoon returned: And as her motives for a ſtrict retirement were now at an end, ſhe was no longer ſcrupulous about going abroad.

Mrs. Brudenell, in whoſe manners there was ſomething ſo repellant to Auguſta, that ſhe could never perſuade herſelf to give her the ſmalleſt ſhare of her confidence, was ſur-

priſed at this change of ſentiment; ſhe did not however neglect to avail herſelf of it, and prevailed upon Auguſta to viſit Kenſington Gardens again. They walked there one fine Sunday morning, at the hour when the gay inhabitants of the metropolis reſort thither, to breath the freſh air, and ſaunter away time. The recollection of the adventure which they had met with in the ſame place, made Auguſta ta unwilling to enter the walk which appeared to be moſt full of company; but Mrs. Brudenell aſſured her, and with truth, that they ſhould find protection from the crowd; and ſhe therefore ſuffered herſelf to be perſuaded to mingle with it.

As it was yet too early in the winter for many perſons of faſhion to be in London, ſhe ſaw little chance of meeting with any of Lady Merton's acquaintance to whom ſhe was known; and in this conjecture ſhe was not miſtaken, as ſhe did not meet a ſingle perſon of whoſe face ſhe had any recollection. If this circumſtance gave her pleaſure, ſhe was never-

nevertheleſs hurt at the general obſervation which ſhe and her companion ſeemed to excite. Some exclamations, which ſhe could not help hearing, on her beauty, inſtead of removing, increaſed her confuſion; and ſhe remarked, with ſome ſurpriſe, that although Mrs. Brudenell was profeſſedly well acquainted with London, ſhe met with no one who appeared to know her. She was herſelf dreſſed with the greateſt ſimplicity; but Mrs. Brudenell, who piqued herſelf on her taſte, or rather that of her milliner, was arrayed in that ſort of faſhionable elegance which borders on the extreme. This ſtriking oppoſition in their appearance, at laſt preſented itſelf to Auguſta, as the cauſe of ſo much notice; and as particularity of any ſort was diſagreeable to her, ſhe pleaded fatigue, and begged to return home. As they were turning down a different walk, in order to do ſo, Auguſta heard ſomebody cry out in a loud whiſper, "Who can that lovely creature be;" and turning her eyes involuntarily to the ſide from whence the voice proceeded, ſhe beheld Mr.

Devereux in the midſt of a large party of gentlemen and ladies. He ſeemed to have perceived her but at that moment; and advancing from his company, exclaimed with much animation, "How happy am I made by the unexpected pleaſure of meeting with Miſs Denbeigh!"

Auguſta perceiving that his party ſtood ſtill with the viſible intention of ſcrutinizing them, was too much embarraſſed to make any reply; which Mr. Devereux obſerving, moved forward, as though he meant to attend her in her walk.

"How lucky," ſaid he, "that I was prevailed upon to come here; I did not know the happineſs which awaited me, when I conſented with ſo much reluctance."

"Have you been long in England?" aſked Auguſta, hardly knowing what ſhe ſaid.

"No,"

"No," he replied, "not many days; and thoſe have been devoted to my father, who is confined with the gout, or I ſhould otherwiſe have paid my reſpects to Lady Merton. I hope ſhe is well."

"Lady Merton is not in town," ſaid Auguſta; "and has been very ill: She is now preparing to ſet out for Nice, where Lord Merton is, who has alſo been much indiſpoſed."

"I am greatly concerned to hear it," replied Mr. Devereux: and after a pauſe of a moment he added, "May I aſk where Miſs Denbeigh's reſidence now is, in the hope that ſhe will permit me ſometimes to have the honour of inquiring after her health?"

"I am at preſent with that Lady," anſwered Auguſta, without being ſufficiently collected to introduce them to each other.

Mr. Devereux, who had been ſo lately abſorbed in the pleaſure of ſeeing her, that he had not in the leaſt regarded her companion, now looked at her with more attention, and a great degree of ſurpriſe. He however bowed to her, and inquired after her health in a name, which, though Auguſta could not plainly diſtinguiſh it, appeared very different from that of Brudenell. She ſeemed alſo to be under ſome reſtraint, but ſoon recovered herſelf, and anſwered his inquiries with an unembarraſſed air.

Mr. Devereux, from having been extremely gay, was now become thoughtful and irreſolute. He however proceeded with them, and at laſt ſaid, "Have you ſeen Lady Merton lately."

"Not very lately," replied Auguſta. "I believe it is full four months ſince I quitted Merton Lodge."

Another

Another pauſe enſued; at length, turning to Mrs. Brudenell, he ſaid, "In what part of the town do you reſide, madam?"

"I do not live in London," replied ſhe, "but in a houſe near to this place, where I ſhall be always happy to ſee Mr. Devereux."

"Suffer me then," ſaid he, with a ſigh which he ſeemed unconſcious of, "to ſee you ſafe home."

"Auguſta, though averſe to this, did not think it proper to make any objection; and Mrs. Brudenell, who now appropriated the civility to herſelf, ſeemed much pleaſed with it: The party, therefore, proceeded, though Mr. Devereux's perplexity appeared little ſhort of that of Auguſta's: Arrived at length at Mrs. Brudenell's houſe, he declined her preſſing ſolicitations to enter it, and with a viſible dejection of ſpirits took his leave.

Mrs. Brudenell now put fifty queſtions to Auguſta, reſpecting her acquaintance with Mr. Devereux; to which ſhe anſwered with as much indifference as ſhe could aſſume, that ſhe had ſometimes ſeen him, though not often, at ſome of her friends' houſes. Mrs. Brudenell then became his exceſſive encomieſt, and declared that ſhe thought him the moſt charming young man ſhe had ever ſeen.

"Your acquaintance with him, madam," ſaid Auguſta, "muſt have been of a much longer date than mine, ſince I think he called you by a different name to that of Brudenell, and you have ſurely been a widow for ſome years."

"We have not met each other for ſeveral years," replied Mrs. Brudenell, "and our intimacy was not very great; ſo that I do not wonder at his not recollecting my right name."

This

This excuſe would have lulled the ſuſpicions of Auguſta, had not the ſurpriſe of Mr. Devereux, on the firſt ſight of Mrs. Brudenell, and his ſubſequent chagrin convinced her, that ſomething myſterious, and beyond her conjectures, muſt have produced ſo great a change in his behaviour. When he firſt accoſted her, joy animated his features; and he had inquired with earneſtneſs, where he might pay his reſpects to her: Yet after this, he had conducted her home, without hardly ſpeaking a word, and he had parted from her, without any renewal of his intention of ſeeing her again, or even the appearance of any remaining ſolicitude about her. This was ſo unlike his former behaviour, ſo very different from his laſt converſation with her, every word of which was diſtinctly imprinted on her memory, that the more ſhe thought about it, the more inexplicable it appeared. Occupied by theſe ſort of reflections, ſhe was frequently abſent, and inattentive to Mrs. Brudenell's converſation; who, with a freedom which ſhe had never uſed before, began to rally her upon

being ſo ſerious; attributing it to the ſight of Mr. Devereux. This intimation alarmed and diſpleaſed Auguſta; who however only anſwered coolly, "That ſhe thought Mrs. Brudenell had been ſo long accuſtomed to ſee her thoughtful, that ſhe would not have aſcribed any new cauſe for what was ſo very uſual."

Mutually diſſatisfied with each other, they ſeparated at an early hour.

CHAP. XXVIII.

MRS. BRUDENELL's time of riſing was ſo late, that Auguſta generally breakfaſted alone. She had juſt ſat down to her ſolitary repaſt; when to her infinite ſurpriſe, ſhe ſaw Mr. Devereux alight at the gate, and in a moment he entered the parlour.

"I knew," ſaid he, "that Miſs Denbeigh did not ſacrifice the morning to her pillow; and as mine could afford me no re-

poſe until I had ſeen her again; I quitted it more than two hours ago, and have been ſauntering hereabouts until I thought ſhe would be at breakfaſt."

"I am glad," returned Auguſta, with a ſmile, "that you have ſo well gueſſed the time; for after ſo long a ride, I ſhould imagine you are heartily diſpoſed to partake of it."

"I will not refuſe to ſhare it with you," replied he, "though ſuch an intruſion as mine intitles me not to the reception you give me."

"Then," replied Auguſta, "I perceive that my fears were not unfounded. Such ſuſpicions muſt convince me, that I have been ſo unfortunate as to offend Mr. Devereux, and that he has withdrawn from me that friendſhip with which he has hitherto honoured me."

"Good

"Good God!" exclaimed he, "is it poſſible that you can have thought, that the man who reverences, who adores you, ſhould have ever ceaſed to think of you with admiration and eſteem? But yet what other inference could you draw from my behaviour yeſterday morning, inconſiſtent and capricious as it muſt have appeared. To explain that is the motive of my preſent viſit; and yet I greatly dread, that the explanation may add to my offences inſtead of mitigating them."

"Fear it not," replied Auguſta. "Mr. Devereux's heart cannot be influenced by caprice; and his motives, whether they relate to me or himſelf, will be heard with gratitude from my friend and monitor."

"How amiable is this condeſcenſion," ſaid he; "but I wanted no new proofs of Miſs Denbeigh's goodneſs. The queſtion I would aſk, the inquiry I would firſt make," continued he, heſitating, "is whether you have long been

been acquainted with the lady you are now with."

"No," replied Auguſta; "ſhe is in fact a ſtranger to me."

"I thought ſo—I believed ſo," continued Mr. Devereux, "and yet I was ſo ſhocked at ſeeing you aſſociated with a woman of reproachable morals, that I loſt my recollection, and quitted you without knowing how I was to act."

The glowing cheeks of Auguſta now became overſpread with a deadly paleneſs. Mr. Devereux obſerved it, and ſeizing her hand, which he preſſed to his lips, ſaid, "The pain I inflict upon you, is inferior, greatly inferior to what I myſelf endure; but it was neceſſary that to ſecure your ſafety, I ſhould thus alarm your delicacy."

He pauſed, and Auguſta ſtill remaining ſilent, he ſaid, "Will you not pronounce my pardon?"

"Your

"Your pardon!" cried Auguſta, faintly, lifting up her eyes, which were filled with tears. "O Mr. Devereux! I can find no words to expreſs my preſent emotions! Even ſuppoſing you are miſinformed reſpecting the character of Mrs. Brudenell, which I am willing to hope, how can I ever thank you ſufficiently for this mark of your kind and diſintereſted attention to me!"

"No information," replied he, "could have led me to doubt the character of any perſon whom Miſs Denbeigh honoured with her notice: An actual knowledge of their real ſituation, was abſolutely requiſite for that. I have long known Mrs. Brudenell, if that be the name ſhe aſſumes; and whatever may be her preſent mode of life; that in which ſhe has formerly moved, muſt for ever render her an unfit companion for you."

"I can then have no further doubts," ſaid Auguſta; "but I owe to you and myſelf the hiſtory of the commencement of my acquaintance with this woman——"

"No,"

"No," cried Mr. Devereux, interrupting her, "neither to me or to yourſelf do you owe it. You cannot be more juſtified in my opinion, than you are already, and I have my reward in the ſervices I have rendered you."

"My conduct in conſequence of that," replied Auguſta, "will convince you of the high value I ſet upon it. Alas! I but too well remember, that in the laſt converſation we had together, you warned me of the dangers I had to apprehend: Yet left to my own guidance, how can I avoid misfortunes of whoſe very exiſtence I am totally ignorant. Oh, why at this criſis am I deprived of the protection of Lady Merton?"

Her tears, which fell in abundance, greatly affected Mr. Devereux. He walked about the room in much agitation; and was at laſt advancing to ſay ſomething of evident import, when his eye caught the watch which Lord Euſton had given to Auguſta, and which then

then hung at her ſide. He ſtopped ſhort; his voice failed him; and his limbs ſeemed to have loſt the power of motion. At length he exclaimed, "O Euſton! envied poſſeſſor of ſuch a treaſure! why do you abandon this lovely creature to thoſe ſorrows which you alone can alleviate?"

Auguſta looked at him with ſurpriſe. "Lord Euſton," ſaid ſhe, "do you ſpeak of? Why, does Mr. Devereux ſuppoſe that Lord Euſton could either influence my mind, or alleviate my ſufferings?"

"I would ſupplicate your pardon for my temerity," replied Mr. Devereux, with much confuſion, "but I do not deſerve it. I did not however mean to lay claim to that confidence which you withhold from me. The expreſſions aroſe from a diſtraction of thought, and a wiſh of ſerving you."

"My pardon," ſaid Auguſta, "I cannot give you, becauſe you have not offended. My

My confidence, however, I can beſtow; and who is it that has ſo juſt a claim as yourſelf? Your ſolicitude for my welfare demands my utmoſt gratitude: and your diſintereſted friendſhip, ſo well proved by pointing out to me the dangers of my preſent ſituation, intitle you to my unreſerved eſteem. Speak then, and without heſitation tell me, why with ſo much emotion you called upon Lord Euſton,"

"O Miſs Denbeigh," anſwered Mr. Devereux, "how amiable, how tranſcendently amiable is your mind! Encouraged thus ſweetly, I will own—I will tell you why ſuch unguarded expreſſions eſcaped my lips. I will lay open to you the whole hiſtory of my heart."

Auguſta bowed, and he proceeded. "The moment in which Lord Euſton, and myſelf firſt beheld you, was I believe alike fatal to the repoſe of each. Our ſtay at Mr. Euſton's, ſhort as it was, diſcovered too many perfections

to

to be reſiſted. With an ingenuous candour Lord Euſton firſt confeſſed his paſſion to me. I concealed mine, and imagined—ah, how vainly imagined,—that I could conquer it. A younger ſon, and with ſlender expectations, what had I to oppoſe to his pretenſions, even if I could have been guilty of the diſhonourable deſign of endeavouring to ſupplant him? I quitted England; but I carried with me ſentiments that rendered my days miſerable. Some domeſtic arrangements brought me home, and I had a packet to deliver to Lady Merton from her ſon. I called in Argyle-ſtreet one morning early, and was ſhewn into the breakfaſt parlour, where, to my inexpreſſible ſurpriſe, I ſaw drawings ſcattered upon the table, which I knew to be yours. My emotions were uncontroulable. I flew to Lord Euſton's houſe, to inquire whether you were indeed in town, and I had the mortification of ſeeing you his viſiter at that early hour, though I believe you did not perceive me, as he was putting you into a chair when I reached the door."

"Indeed,"

"Indeed," cried Auguſta, interrupting him, and bluſhing highly, "it was a moſt extraordinary accident which led me to his houſe that morning."

Mr. Devereux appeared not to notice her confuſion, and proceeded thus. "My fears perhaps produced too eaſy a belief; for I no longer doubted but that a mutual attachment ſubſiſted between you, and as I was not able to aſſume fortitude ſufficient to witneſs it, I determined, under pretence of urgent buſineſs, once more to quit my native ſoil. An unſolicited opportunity gave me the melancholy pleaſure of a ſhort converſation with you at Lady Merton's, where I firſt heard of the death of Mr. Euſton."

"I well remember," exclaimed Auguſta, in a tremulous voice, "the apprehenſions you expreſſed; alas! they have been but too well verified."

"My

"My apprehenſions," continued Mr. Devereux, "aroſe from my knowledge of Lord Seaton. I trembled for the conſequences of a partiality which I knew would never be ſanctioned by his conſent. Your happineſs was dearer by far to me than my own; but to hint at your ſituation would have been preſumptuous; and in my ſtruggle to ſuppreſs what I felt, I fear ſome expreſſions eſcaped, me, which muſt have appeared inconſiſtent, if not ridiculous."

He pauſed; but Auguſta was too much affected by his laſt ſpeech, to attempt giving him any anſwer; he therefore continued thus:

"Confirmed in my ſuſpicions, I reviſited the Continent, from whence I ſhould not yet have returned, had not the alarming ſituation of my father required it. A gouty habit, abounding alſo with a complication of other diſeaſes, has reduced him to ſo dangerous a ſtate, that his phyſicians pronounce he cannot long

long ſurvive. The importunities of ſome of my friends, led me to Kenſington Gardens laſt Sunday morning. My joy at meeting you was unutterable; it occaſioned a momentary forgetfulneſs of the engagements I believed you under. Pardon me if I now confeſs, that it all vaniſhed when I perceived who the Lady was with whom you were aſſociated."

"I too well perceived," cried Auguſta, with downcaſt eyes, "that ſomething extraordinary occaſioned ſo ſudden a change: But whether to look for it in you, Mrs. Brudenell, or myſelf, I was equally at a loſs; and that you left me without an explanation, gave me real pain."

"I left you," continued Mr. Devereux, "to reflect on the conduct I was to purſue; and ſuppoſing that Lord Euſton's abſence might originate from his father's diſcovery of the attachment between you, and that the neceſſity of a concealed ſituation, had induced

duced you to ſeek refuge in the houſe of a woman with whoſe unworthineſs you were unacquainted, I heſitated not long before I reſolved to ſee you, to inform you of your real ſituation, and to implore, that, as the friend of Lord Euſton, you would command me to ſerve you."

Perceiving that he waited her reply, Auguſta, though with viſible embarraſſment, ſaid, "Your generous deſigns meet, as they deſerve, my warmeſt gratitude. A wiſh for retirement has indeed brought me to this ſpot; but not from any of the motives you have conjectured. As it has not eſcaped your penetration, I will own to you, that I believe Lord Euſton did honour me with ſome portion of his regard; but I had little difficulty in perſuading him, that his rank and family required the renunciation of a partiality, the object of which was every way unworthy of his affection; ſince if no other obſtacle had ariſen, an inſurmountable barrier would have been found in her own inſenſibility. I have

now no ſort of intercourſe with him, neither do I know in what part of the world he is: But his happineſs I never can be indifferent to, becauſe he is the nephew of Mr. Euſton."

"Lovely, and moſt beloved Miſs Denbeigh," exclaimed Mr. Devereux, his expreſſive countenance animated by renewed hope, "what an unexpected happineſs does this condeſcending avowal open to my view! Oh complete the bliſs of this preſent moment, by telling me that your heart equally diſclaims any other preference; your devoted, your adoring Devereux will then flatter himſelf, that time, and his ardent aſſiduities——"

"Hold," ſaid Auguſta, interrupting him in a gentle but collected manner; "you have given me your confidence, and it is now your turn to receive mine. The ſituation you ſaw me in at Mr. Euſton's could give you no idea of my being the child of misfortune: Yet ſuch I am. My parents are even unknown to me: and abandoned by them, at

an

an early period of infancy, I muſt have periſhed a miſerable outcaſt, had not the good, the benevolent Mr. Euſton received, nouriſhed, and adopted me."

Mr. Devereux, deeply affected by the mournful, yet calm recital of Auguſta, could utter no more than an inarticulate homage to the virtues of Mr. Euſton: She therefore proceeded.

"His death was haſtened by the failure of his banker. It reduced me a ſecond time to a ſtate of indigence, and that was a blow which his affection for me rendered inſupportable to him. That Providence, which never forſakes the wretched, introduced me to the knowledge of Lady Merton, at a time when my oppreſſed ſoul almoſt ſunk under the weight of its afflictions. Her goodneſs to me you have witneſſed. It has never been withdrawn; but an unpleaſant occurrence in her family, which will ſoon be removed by the marriage of Lord Merton, rendered a

temporary ſeparation neceſſary. On my arrival in town, chance diſcovered to me that Mr. Euſton's banker was dividing his effects among his creditors; and from him I received a ſum of money, which, though ſmall in the eſtimation of others, is ſufficient for that ſimple ſtyle of life which it is my wiſh to adopt. A reſidence in the neighbourhood of London was moſt eligible, on account of the conſtant intelligence I hope to receive from Lady Merton; and a friend to whom I applied, equally unſuſpicious with myſelf, found out for me, as ſhe I am ſure thought, a comfortable abode in the houſe of Mrs. Brudenell."

Here Auguſta pauſed; and Mr. Devereux paid her his fervent acknowledgements. He then revived the ſubject of his heart, and in the moſt impaſſioned words implored her acceptance of him.

" Has not the hiſtory I have given you of myſelf," ſaid Auguſta, " convinced you of the impropriety of your propoſals?"

' It

"It has only added," replied Mr. Devereux, with energy, "ſympathizing pity to perfect admiration. It has only ſtrengthened the extatic hope, that if I am permitted to call you mine, I ſhall enjoy the exquiſite delight of rendering your future days happy."

"How can I repay ſuch exalted generoſity," exclaimed Auguſta.

"Oh," cried Mr. Devereux, "by giving me a place in your affections, which will confer upon me more than the whole univerſe beſide can beſtow."

"No," replied Auguſta, "I will make you the return I ought, by convincing you that an obſcure girl, without connexions, and without fortune, is an improper wife for Mr. Devereux. His family would diſclaim her—the world would ridicule his choice—and he would ſoon and too fatally feel the folly of ſuch irremediable imprudence."

"No, never!" replied Mr. Devereux. "The approaching diſſolution of my poor father, will ſoon leave me reſponſible to no one for my conduct: And the opinion of the world can have no weight with me, where it oppoſes itſelf unreaſonably againſt my choice of happineſs. Ah, Miſs Denbeigh, I ſee the inſenſibility of your heart. You do not pity my ſufferings—you have no intention to relieve them."

"You do me injuſtice," ſaid Auguſta, in much agitation. "I reſpect—I eſteem—I *ever have* eſteemed Mr. Devereux. But can I prove it by ſuffering him to degrade himſelf by a ſuch a choice? Ah, if you could read my heart, or view its preſent ſtruggles, the agonies which it coſts me to give you this advice, would convince you that it ought to be purſued. If ever heaven diſcovers my parents to me, and they are ſuch as Mr. Devereux can without a bluſh acknowledge, the inſenſibility, of which he reproaches me——"

"Oh!"

"Oh!" cried Mr. Devereux, interrupting her, "do not drive me to diſtraction, by naming ſo diſtant, and uncertain a period. I ſtruggled againſt my paſſion when I believed it hopeleſs; but now the only impediment is removed, I cannot again ſubmit to loſe ſight of all my earthly felicity."

Auguſta was beginning a reply when the door opened, and Mrs. Brudenell made her entrance. As the breakfaſt was gone cold, and had beſides the appearance of not having been touched, ſhe looked at them both with ſurpriſe, and aſked Auguſta if ſhe had not offered Mr. Devereux ſome breakfaſt.

Her confuſed reply, together with the ſilence of Mr. Devereux, excited a ſuſpicion very common to little minds, and inſeparable from guilty ones, that her premature entrance had interrupted a converſation of which ſhe had been the ſubject. She rang for her ſervant to bring in other breakfaſt things; and Mr. Devereux perceiving that it was impoſ-

ſible to renew his converſation with Auguſta, abruptly withdrew.

The ſurmiſe which had ariſen in the mind of Mrs. Brudenell, was not of that pleaſant ſort which could add much to her good humour. After a ſilence of ſome minutes, ſhe turned to Auguſta and ſaid, "It is very odd, Miſs Denbeigh, that a young man, with whom you *pretend* to have little acquaintance, ſhould make you a viſit at ſo unuſual an hour."

Auguſta was diſpleaſed, as well as ſurpriſed at the freedom of this addreſs; however ſhe anſwered with her uſual gentleneſs, "I aſſure you, madam, the buſineſs which brought him hither was of great importance to me."

"No doubt of that," retorted Mrs. Brudenell, with an ironical ſmile. "But when we are next accoſted by *ſtrangers*, (and ſhe laid a deep emphaſis on the word) I hope I ſhall be ſurfeited with no more affected frights."

Such

Such unexpected, and indeed undeſerved, rudeneſs, ſhocked Auguſta ſo much, that ſhe attempted no reply, but quitted the room; and in her way up ſtairs, meeting with Mrs. Brudenell's ſervant, ſhe diſpatched her for a coach. Fortunately the girl met one that was juſt then returning empty to London, and Auguſta perceiving it draw up to the door, ſtaid no longer than whilſt ſhe threw on her cloak, and then ordered herſelf to be drove to the houſe of Mrs. Mills.

CHAP. XXIX.

TO a mind ſo cautious of inflicting pain as was Auguſta's, it would have required ſome conſideration how to make a ſudden departure, without occaſioning ſurpriſe or offence. Mrs. Brudenell had however herſelf contrived the means, and ſpared her gentle ſpirit the diſagreeable taſk of making her intentions known: And the inſult ſhe had received, juſtified her in her own opinion, for abandoning the houſe without ceremony, which ſhe could not have done, had Mrs. Bru-

Brudenell perſevered in her former civil deportment.

Arrived in Bond-ſtreet, ſhe briefly related to Mrs. Mills, that ſhe had diſcovered Mrs. Brudenell to be a woman of ſuſpected character, and that ſhe had experienced treatment from her which had compelled her to quit her protection. Mrs. Mills's concern was exceſſive; and though ſhe did not doubt an atom of what Auguſta had aſſerted, yet ſhe ſaid ſhe was determined to learn the whole from Mrs. Manſel, who had recommended her ſhop to Mrs. Brudenell.

She ſallied forth directly, and in leſs than an hour returned to Auguſta with the following hiſtory, which, with ſtrict injunctions of ſecreſy, ſhe had obtained from Mrs. Manſel.

Mrs. Brudenell was really the wife of a Mr. Brudenell, a gentleman of independent fortune, in Cornwall; with whom ſhe had lived in a moſt expenſive way of life, until his

affairs were greatly deranged. During the time it was neceſſary for him to ſecret himſelf, ſhe became acquainted with General Marſden, with whom ſhe ſoon after eloped. Mr. Brudenell, ſcorning to purſue a woman who had ſo baſely deſerted him, and too much hurt at the infamy of her conduct to continue in England, with the remains of his ſhattered fortune retired into Ruſſia, where he ſoon fell a victim either to a broken heart, or the changes of climate, which his ſituation in the army ſubjected him to. On the report of his death, his wife lived publicly with General Marſden, and paſſed by his name; but as he did not long ſurvive, ſhe was left about three years ago, with an annuity of two hundred pounds a year, which was bequeathed to her under the name of Brudenell, which ſhe then thought fit to re-aſſume. Mrs. Manſel added, that Mr. Manſel, as attorney to the Marſden family, had the payment of this annuity; but that ſhe had kept up no further intercourſe with her than that of occaſionally

ſeeing

ſeeing her, when ſhe called upon her huſband for it. Her recommendation of Mrs. Mills, ſhe ſaid, had originated at one of theſe viſits; but that ſhe had made a much greater uſe of her name than was ever intended.

When ſhe had finiſhed this account, Mrs. Mills ſet herſelf about repairing the evils ſhe had occaſioned in the beſt manner ſhe was then able to do. She ſent for Mrs. Davis, and diſpatched her in a coach to Brompton, to fetch Auguſta's cloaths, and to defray the pecuniary demands which Mrs. Brudenell had againſt her. Mrs. Davis was inſtructed to anſwer no queſtions, and indeed to have no ſort of altercation with Mrs. Brudenell. She acquitted herſelf of her commiſſion, and returned ſoon after the cloſe of the evening. In fact, it had been attended with no difficulties, which required the exertion of her prudence, for Mrs. Brudenell had given her free admittance into Auguſta's chamber, and ordered her own ſervant to aſſiſt in packing up her trunk; by whoſe hands ſhe had alſo received the

the offered payment; which, as it was more than ſhe could ſtrictly demand, ſhe had readily given a receipt in full for.

Auguſta and Mrs. Mills were glad to get rid of her in ſo eaſy a way. They did not, however, fail to animadvert on the fallacy of a ſpecious appearance, which had ſo far miſled the latter. Auguſta was amazed at her having wiſhed to engage with a boarder; but Mrs. Mills explained the reaſon, by hinting the difficulty which a doubtful or irreputable character had to obtain companions, to attend them to public places. She quickly ſaw why their walks in Kenſington Gardens had been attended with ſo much obſervation, and why they had been attacked in ſo free a way by the young men who annoyed them in the walks one morning; and ſhe could not enough felicitate herſelf, on having eſcaped the mortification of meeting any body there with whom ſhe had been formerly acquainted. The replacing of her cloaths, her books, and her muſic, in their former ſituations, employed

ployed her for the remainder of the evening; and ſhe reſolved quietly to remain in thoſe apartments, until ſhe learnt ſomething deciſive from Lady Merton. Left at laſt to the undiſturbed poſſeſſion of her own thoughts, they recurred to the tranſactions of the morning, and ſhe yielded herſelf up to the delightful idea of being beloved by Mr. Devereux. His long attachment—his generoſity—the delicacy of his attentions, all ruſhed into her mind. The paroxyſm was however of ſhort duration: Her own unfriended ſituation ſoon preſented itſelf to her view, and a deep melancholy ſuperceded her viſionary pleaſures. Her heart would have rebelled againſt her rejection of Mr. Devereux, but her reaſon approved of an effort, which his unequalled love, ſo well deſerved. She even rejoiced at the interruption Mrs. Brudenell had given them, and reproached her too yielding boſom for the confeſſion which ſhe had almoſt made. It then occurred to her, that ſhe had left no meſſage for Mr. Devereux, with the ſervant, if he called again. This gave her pain: But

at

at length ſhe concluded, that he would certainly inquire from Mrs. Brudenell where ſhe was gone, who would not fail to inform him of the only probable place ſhe knew. In ſuch reflections as theſe, ſhe paſſed the greateſt part of the night. The morning arrived, and with it expectations, which ſhe could not conceal from herſelf. That, however, and the whole day paſſed without her ſeeing Mr. Devereux.

"Perhaps," ſaid ſhe to herſelf, "his father may be worſe. Or perhaps my arguments may have convinced him. Be it ſo. May he be ever happy and honoured, though I am miſerable."

Four more days elapſed in the ſame doubtful expectation. Auguſta then perſuading herſelf that Mr. Devereux intended to ſee her no more, exerted herſelf to regain her former compoſure.

She

She however thought it inconſiſtent with the anxiety he had profeſſed, not to have aſſured himſelf of the eligibility of the ſituation ſhe had choſen. She knew the ſtrength of her own mind, and felt that if another interview had taken place, her adherence to her former reſolutions would have been uniform and rigid.

Mr. Devereux might, however, think otherwiſe: He might think it moſt ſafe and prudent to avoid the danger of a ſecond converſation. Yet if ſo, there were means by which he might have aſſured her of his ſubmiſſion to the neceſſity of a ſeparation, which would have ſpared her the painful reflection, that ſhe was abandoned without regret: Or he might have conveyed inquiries which would have done away the appearance of neglect.

A letter which ſhe got from Lady Merton, afforded her abundant ſatisfaction. It was dated from Calais, where ſhe was ſafely landed;

landed; and at which place she then waited, for passports through the French territories. She had not suffered at all from fatigue, and thought that her health daily amended. Her letter was filled with the most affectionate expressions, and concluded with an assurance that she would write again, as soon as she reached Nice.

Mrs. Mills, without declaring her intention to Augusta, had, with officious kindness, again visited Argyle-street; from whence, however, she collected no information of any importance.

As her motive was now become so visible, Augusta, in order to eradicate her suspicions, shewed her Lady Merton's letter, and told her, that as she should now hear punctually from her friend, there was no farther occasion for any inquiries being made in Argyle-street.

Her

Her time now passed tranquilly, if not happily; but her wish for society was so much abated, that she confined herself entirely to the house.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXX.

THE morning after Auguſta quitted Brompton, Mr. Devereux had indeed called again. As his viſit was not made at ſo early an hour as before, he was received by Mrs. Brudenell, of whom, as ſoon as the rules of good breeding would permit him, he enquired after Auguſta.

"I have not ſeen her," replied Mrs. Brudenell, with a very ſtately air, "ſince you left us yeſterday."

"Is

"Is ſhe ill?" anxiouſly aſked Mr. Devereux.

"Not that I know of," replied ſhe.

"Will you then, madam," ſaid Mr. Devereux, "do me the favour of ſending to inquire if I may be allowed the pleaſure of ſeeing her."

"That," ſaid ſhe, "is out of my power, as I know not where to apply to her."

"Has ſhe quitted your houſe," cried Mr. Devereux, with ſurpriſe.

"Yes," replied Mrs. Brudenell.

"Will you have the goodneſs to inform me where ſhe went?" ſaid Mr. Devereux.

"O Sir," anſwered Mrs. Brudenell, "that you muſt know beſt. You did not perſuade her to leave my houſe, I dare ſay, without

without providing her with another place to go to."

Mr. Devereux felt his reſentment riſe at this inſinuation; but he checked it, and anſwered coolly, "That Miſs Denbeigh had friends among ſome of the moſt diſtinguiſhed families in the kingdom, to whoſe protection he ſuppoſed ſhe was gone; but as he had very urgent buſineſs with her, he ſhould be glad to ſee her without loſs of time."

"That," ſaid Mrs. Brudenell, with a malicious ſmile, "is very likely, when ſhe concealed herſelf ſo cloſely whilſt ſhe was at my houſe, that there was hardly any ſuch thing as prevailing upon her to venture out of doors."

"Miſs Denbeigh's inclinations might lead her to retirement," replied Mr. Devereux, endeavouring to ſtifle his anger; "and her character is ſo unſullied, that neither malice or envy dare affix a ſtain to it."

This ſpeech, which to Mrs. Brudenell ſeemed to include a reproach upon her own conduct, did not at all diminiſh her irraſcibility towards Auguſta. She had, in fact, penetrated into the deſigns of Mr. Devereux, and therefore determined to enjoy the malignant pleaſure of concealing the place of Auguſta's abode, on the diſcovery of which ſhe perceived he was ſo anxiouſly bent. Aſſuming a look of mingled ſcorn and indifference, ſhe anſwered, "If Mr. Devereux had not attacked reputations with more ſucceſs than he defends them, the object of his partiality would not perhaps have been out of his reach."

"I know not," ſaid Mr. Devereux, "what I am to underſtand by thoſe inſinuations; but your ſervant, madam, can perhaps give me the information I am in want of."

"Indeed," replied Mrs. Brudenell, "you are deceived if you believe ſo. Miſs Denbeigh herſelf ſtopped a coach as it paſſed by, and

and left me without having the good manners to take any ſort of leave.'

This account gained little credit with Mr. Devereux, who knew how incapable ſhe was of behaving with rudeneſs to any one. It even confirmed him more ſtrongly in the belief, that Mrs. Brudenell was acquainted with the place of Auguſta's retreat; and that ſuppoſing he had betrayed the hiſtory of her former life, ſhe concealed her knowledge of it, in order to take a revenge for the diſcovery he had made. His anxiety however to learn where Auguſta was, got the better of every other emotion, and he reſolved to try every means of bringing Mrs. Brudenell to the confeſſion.

" How is it," ſaid he, " that I have offended you, madam, ſince you thus anſwer me with unkindneſs, and trifle with my impatience? I would gladly embrace any occaſion to do you a ſervice, and yet you refuſe to oblige me, by the communication of an in-

con-

conſiderable piece of intelligence, which you can be no way intereſted to conceal."

"O Sir," replied Mrs. Brudenell, "your profeſſions are rather made too late. Will you deny to me, that you have been the cauſe of Miſs Denbeigh's quitting my houſe ſo abruptly? Can you ſay that your buſy intelligence has not deprived me of her company? Such an ungenerous interference I deſpiſe; and if no other perſon in the world could diſcover her retreat to you, I here ſwear that you ſhould never know it from me."

"I will not deny," ſaid Mr. Devereux, riſing from his ſeat, "that my regard for Miſs Denbeigh is infinitely greater than my *veneration* for Mrs. Brudenell: And that whatever hints I thought it requiſite to give her, reſpecting her abode in this houſe, have been moſt amply juſtified by what I have heard this morning."

He then quitted the room without farther ceremony.

Mrs. Brudenell's rage was now unbounded; and she therefore more than ever desired to revenge herself upon Mr. Devereux. She now began to suspect, that Augusta really desired to be concealed from him, which might operate with her as a principal motive for leaving her house so suddenly; and she condemned herself for having been so hasty with her on the morning of her departure, as that she thought might have prevented the confidence which Augusta would probably have reposed in her. It was plain that Mr. Devereux had an attachment to her, and equally so, that if it had been mutual, she would have apprised him of her intentions, or at least would not have left him in suspense about her removal. Having thus settled the point, as she imagined her resentment towards Augusta abated, but its inveteracy against Mr. Devereux was increased. She recollected that he had said something about making

an inquiry of her ſervant; and fearing that he ſhould actually gain ſome intelligence from that quarter, ſhe directly ſummoned the girl into the parlour, and began to queſtion her whether ſhe had learnt any thing from Mrs. Davis. The anſwers ſoon convinced her, that ſhe had nothing to apprehend.

In fact, Mrs. Davis had too much prudence to ſatisfy the ſervant's curioſity in any one reſpect; who had however aſked her fifty queſtions about Auguſta, and declared the ſorrow ſhe felt at her going away, adding, "That ſhe was the moſt beſt, good naturedeſt perſon ſhe ever ſaw."

Mr. Devereux returned to London, diſſatisfied and dejected. His impatience to ſee Auguſta made him unhappy, though he had no doubt but that he ſhould ſoon learn the place of her retreat. Yielding however to the anxiety which the leaſt delay inflicted, he reſolved to diſpatch his man to Brompton that very evening, to try if he could obtain any in-

formation from Mrs. Brudenell's ſervant, which would direct his ſearch. He ſuſpected that ſhe would be tutored by her miſtreſs to conceal the little ſhe might know, and therefore inſtructed Willis how he was to proceed. The fellow, who was quick, and clever, executed his commiſſion with adroitneſs. He watched about Mrs. Brudenell's houſe, till he fortunately ſaw Mrs. Brudenell go to a neighbour's houſe at ſome little diſtance, attended by her ſervant, who carried a lanthorn to light her. He waited until the girl returned, and accoſting her juſt as ſhe entered the gate, deſired her to inform Miſs Denbeigh that he wiſhed to ſpeak with her.

"Lack-a-day," replied Suſan, "we haſnt Miſs Deebeigh with us now."

"No!" ſaid Willis, "then pray tell me where I can find her, for I have a meſſage of very great importance for her."

"I'd

"I'd beſure to tell you, if I knowd," anſwered Suſan, "for all my miſtreſs bid me not."

"You are an extreme civil, well behaved young woman," ſaid Willis, "and I am ſure, if you cannot tell me where ſhe is gone, you will at leaſt oblige me with all the particulars you know about her going."

"Yes," replied Suſan, "that I will truely, for Miſs Denbeigh's ſake, who is the ſweeteſt creature I ever ſee. Do you know then, that as ſure as we two ſtand here, Madam Brudenell ſcolded her ſo, that ſhe made her run away; for as I took ſome hot toaſt into the parlour, I heard her ſay, ſays ſhe, 'I hope I ſhall have no more detecting of ſtrangers,' ſays ſhe; and you muſt know there had been a ſtrange gentleman with her that very morning. And ſo then Miſs Denbeigh went up ſtairs, and put on her cloak and called me, and bid me ſeek for a coach; and, poor ſoul, I ſeed that ſhe had been a crying. Howſom-

ever I met a coach, and when I told her it was at the gate, ſhe ſaid I needn't follow her, and ſhe gave me half a crown to buy me a ribband, to wear for her ſake, and ſo I will, and wear it as long as I live."

"And I," ſaid Willis will give you another, to buy a ribbon to wear for my ſake. But pray did you hear her order the coachman where he was to drive her, or did you ſee the way that ſhe took?"

"No, indeed," anſwered Suſan; "for Madame Brudenell juſt then rung for me, and ſhe looked ſo croſs, I durſtne go out of doors to look. To be ſure, ſhe was ſorry enough when ſhe found Miſs Denbeigh did not come back again, and aſked me a bundation of queſtions, and ſo then ſhe bid me not ſay that I knowd any thing about her, if people cam'd, for to go about aſking any thing about her."

The ſimplicity of this relation convinced the ſhrewd Willis, that Suſan had told all that ſhe knew; therefore giving her the half crown, which he had promiſed, and telling her that he would call upon her again, the next time he came that way, he ſtole a kiſs from the lips of the aſtoniſhed Suſan, and then bade her good night.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXXI.

MR. DEVEREUX was involved in ſtill greater perplexities, by the account Willis gave him. He hardly could believe that Mrs. Brudenell dared uſe Auguſta ill, and yet from Suſan's ſtory it appeared ſhe had done ſo, and on his account. He at firſt thought of going to Mrs. Brudenell, even at that late hour, to tax her with her cruelty, and compel her to acquaint him where Auguſta had reſided before ſhe came to her, hoping by that means to trace her out: But this idea had in it too much raſhneſs; and was therefore ſoon diſcarded. In this ſort of painful uncertainty

certainty many days elapſed. His father's illneſs prevented his going into public, and indeed he knew that ſuch places of reſort were not likely to be frequented by Auguſta. He now began to accuſe her of cruelty and unkindneſs, and to ſuſpect that her departure was concerted between her and Mrs. Brudenell, and that the latter was enjoined to ſecrecy.

Inconſiſtent, and improbable as this was, the idea continued to haunt his imagination; and he at length determined to viſit Brompton once more: To try to appeaſe the indignation of Mrs. Brudenell, and ſoften her heart to the confeſſion he wanted.

On giving in his name, Mrs. Brudenell was denied. He ſent to entreat that ſhe would indulge him with a few moments converſation, intimating that he could not leave the houſe, until he had ſeen her. Her reply contained a ſolemn refuſal ever to ſee him again with her own conſent; together with

ſome

ſome reproaches for his rudeneſs, in entering her houſe ſo freely; and finding it impoſſible to reverſe this ſentence, he was compelled to return to London.

The increaſing illneſs of his father, and his uncertainty about the fate of Auguſta brought on a deep melancholy. The phyſicians who attended Lord Sunderne, at length told him, that if he could be removed to Bath, and by drinking the waters, obtain a regular fit of the gout, his other complaints, to which they could adminiſter no further remedies, might be removed. Mr. Devereux, with true filial tenderneſs, urged him to the trial; and propoſed attending him. Lord Sunderne was with difficulty perſuaded to attempt it, dreading his want of ſtrength to perform the journey: However the entreaties of his ſon prevailed, and by ſlow ſtages they removed to Bath. His conſtitution, emaciated by a complication of diſorders, had not however ſtrength to produce the deſired fit of the gout; and he continued to live in a lingering painful

ful ſtate of exiſtence. Mr. Devereux ſcarcely ever quitted his apartment, reſolving to watch the glimmering remains of life, and to ſooth its laſt moments, with the tender cares of affectionate duty. His father and Auguſta engroſſed every thought. The awful moment was faſt approaching, when he was to be ſevered from the former, and the latter, he believed, had for ever renounced him.

END OF VOL. II.

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